To

J. T. Caldwell

("Caldie"),

my loyal colleague

and friend with

deep regard & appreciation for

his acting, coming his love

of study and the sacrifice

of his hours of leisure and

rest in the doing of.

from

Guy A. Acord.

Glasgow · 14/5/1958

NO

TRAITOR'S GAIT!

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GUY A. ALDRED

IN TWELVE MONTHLY NUMBERS

Number One - - DECEMBER 1955



1955

The Strickland Press, 104 George Street, Glasgow, C.1

CONTENTS

FOREWORD
Page 5

PART I: PRELUDE

1. The Tower of London
page 5

2. The Theme Reviewed
page 7

PART II: I WATCH MYSELF GO BY

1. The Watch Begins
page 9

2. Endowed for Struggle
page 13

3. Thoughts of Youth
page 17

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE AUTHOR
frontispiece

Birth Certificates
page 11

Marriage Certificate
page 12

The Author's Mother
page 12

Hugh Myddleton School Groups
pages 19 and 20

Bigamous Marriage Certificate
page 23



PHOTO STUDY BY HECTOR MCKAY

GUY A. ALDRED

October 1950

FOREWORD

In 1908, I published a fragment of thought autobiography, entitled *Dogmas Discarded*. This was revised and republished in 1940 and is being circulated still. This study followed an exact chronological order. It had to be told exactly in order of time.

Dogmas Discarded is incorporated in the present work.

My "trials" for alleged sedition, London and Glasgow, are treated as a distinct book. They are published and circulated under the title *Rex v Aldred*.

My Courts Martial have to be compiled for publication as a separate study. This record belongs also to my autobiography.

Then there are my prison thoughts. It seems strange to me, whenever I think of the prison anthologies that have been published in my time, that the compilers have shown an undue anxiety to exclude the prison thoughts of Richard Carlile, Veer Savarkar, and myself.

The world owes a debt to Richard Carlile that can never be repaid. The man's thoroughness of concept outlaws him. Savarkar evolved the philosophy of the Indian struggle and is the world's outstanding Hindu scholar and thinker. His martyrdom was a terrible experience, almost impossible of survival. His tense sincerity challenges the complacency of the compilers. I, at least, thought in prison, and did not just sojourn there. A kind of common completeness of outlawry links Savarkar and myself with Carlile. We are the corner stones that the builders of the temple have despised and rejected.

My prison thoughts will find a place also in the final memoirs. Meantime I mention some of the jail musings.

In *The Word* for December 1943, I commenced an anthology of my prison thoughts under the title "Slow Calvary", sub-title, "The Cup". "Sown in Dishonour" belongs to these writings; and there are various prison essays scattered through most volumes of *The Word*, including an important study, called "The Magnificat".

Glasgow, November 5, 1955 — *GUY A. ALDRED*

PART I. PRELUDE

For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound,
Who shall prepare himself to the battle?
CORINTHIANS, 14:8

1. THE TOWER OF LONDON

This autobiographical study would need no prelude but for its title. The title needs to be explained. The explanation is very simple. Possibly the explanation will label the writing as a study in cockney autobiography. I expect the reader to find it a record of somewhat wider scope of activity than that.

Certainly, I was born within sound of Bow Bells. My youth was spent either in the heart of the City of London or on its fringe. I went to Church within that ancient and restricted area known as the City of London, as distinct from the wider region known as London, but not yet Greater London. I knew its history and rejoiced in its lore and tradition. This was my real world. Naturally, much of my tramping—for in those days I walked and mused as I walked—took me within sight of the Tower of London. To gaze at this structure was to be carried back in imagination to the Norman days. It was in vision a complete cinemascope of the history of London, the rise and fall of statemen, palace conspiracies, and the sufferings and attempted revolts of the common people. The word "cinemascope" had not been invented at that time. One wrote and spoke of "panorama". The idea is the same and "cinemascope" is the more expressive term.

The Tower of London means different

things to different folk. Some think of crown jewels. Others have or pretend an interest in ancient cannons. Yet others identify the Tower with the changing of the guard. To me, the Tower of London has meant only one small item of fact and interest—small in relation to the tower itself, immense in relation to human thought and vanity—Traitor's Gate! The name has had always a strange fascination for me.

I do not wish to see the purple parade of history. I am not interested in kings and queens, except when they fall, and show some heroism. Then I would rescue them personally. I do not bow to accepted monarchs. I would not execute fallen ones. I am neither toady nor executioner. In their hour of suffering I would welcome ex-kings and ex-queens into the commonwealth as fellow-citizens and would do them no personal harm. I would wish them a long and happy life. Why not?

Crown jewels and red carpets have no interest for me. My interest is the Traitor's Gate. It bids me pause to think.

This interest was on me before I became a Boy Preacher. It remained with me during my Boy Preacher activity. The interest remains though it is so many years since I left London and I have no notion of returning to the City of London. Glasgow also has a history. So has every town and village in the world. If stones could speak the entire earth would be alive with counsel and confession.

As a boy preacher, living in London, caressing its history whilst I but read the history of the world, my mind was ever on the Tower of London and its ill-famed Traitor's Gate. I thought of the many condemned persons who had passed through that gate who were no traitors—men of courage and principle. Often their doom had been sealed by men whose hearts were ever black with treachery. As I thought of this historic significance of Traitor's Gate, my mind gave form to the religious contrast of the broad path that leadeth to destruction, and the narrow one that leads to salvation. I suspected that few of my Christian friends understood the phrases they bandied about and used with such glib pretence at understanding. My friends spoke with such quaint orthodoxy. Their emptiness of mind astounded me; for they regarded each phrase as having the opposite meaning to what its sense and content expressed. These friends were happy in this folly of misbelief. I thought on Traitor's Gate and found their calculated orthodoxy of unbelief intolerable. A blasphemous sham. Which is why I ceased from being a Boy Preacher and in due course of evolution became what I am.

The broad way is the way of success. It is the path that leads to security, blessed word; to honour and distinction. One first sees life in the slums, in log cabin, or workhouse. One ends up dining with kings or as a President. From hardship to ease, with one's fellows left behind to perish. That is the broad way. The path pursued by great preachers and politicians. It leads to mental and moral stagnation which is another name for damnation. Purple and fine linen atone for corruption of soul.

Then there is the narrow way. It is the path that is lined with suffering. It has no worldly goal. At the end, there exists no success. It is the way scorned by worldlings. It is the way of salvation.

I use the word "salvation" correctly, as the disciples of Jesus used it, before Tertullian corrupted its meaning. The narrow way of salvation is the path of healing, the path to health, the path to wholesomeness.

Thinking as a Cockney ought of the Tower of London caused me to reach the conclusion that one must choose between two ways of walking through life. There was the broad way that led away from the punishments signified by the traitor's gate, but actually led to the real traitor's gate, if integrity be the measurement of man. Then there was the narrow way, the way of integrity, of truth, and loyalty: the way too often of personal destruction.

And so I opposed two conceptions, engaged in word play to quieten my fear of life's struggle:

Traitor's Gate, so termed by worldlings, the way of worldly doom and personal sovereignty of mind;

Traitor's Gait, the way in which those who bowed before kings conducted themselves, persons actually afraid to live because they were afraid to die. Persons who sought to command the whole world by losing their individual soul.

I decided which path I would take. The story of that decision is a challenge to the world I have challenged all my life. It is the story of a man who is unbeaten. I do not write this autobiography because my life is finished. I write it because I feel that my life is opening out, almost at its beginning.

This is the record of a heretic's path. It tells the reader how I walked and where my walking took me. I strode through certain main adventures, not always without fear, but certainly without thought of compromise or surrender. The story is lightened by the incidental record of lesser adventures, mere incidents of the wayside, sidewalk ornamentation.

To the best of my ability, I have told the story truthfully. I think that it has colour. There would be no purpose served by the record if it were drab.

The story is a living story of a career that has led nowhere because the walk has not reached its goal. The title is not an epitaph. It is a defiance. It is a sound title for an adventurous life lived in the jungle of civilization. It throws down the gauntlet to self-seeking worldliness and hypocrisy. It condemns the complacent, the so-good-for-nothing hirelings.

After fifty-three years of striving and striding, I am proud to entitle my story: *No Traitor's Gait.* That is the whole theme of this autobiography.

2. THE THEME REVIEWED

Looking back on the evolution of my thought, religious and political, and recalling particular episodes of the adventure or misadventure that has been my life, I note a strange tendency to do the right thing at the wrong time. My word must not be accepted on this point. It is a statement that must be presented factually. This will be done.

By the right thing, I do not mean to say that what was said or done was necessarily right. I only mean that, at the time I did a certain thing, the action was condemned by my immediate contemporaries. Subsequently, exactly the same course of conduct was pursued by my critics. It was not only hailed as being right but was accepted as the fashion from then on. Nothing was said about my anticipatory activity nor about my condemnation. I have described this attitude of the movement as hypocrisy. In this record I assail such hypocrisy.

It is possible that this treatment has left me with a chip on my shoulder. It is not nice to have one's virtues swept to one side either wilfully or thoughtlessly. As regards the movement, the sweeping has been calculated. I have been viewed always as a danger.

Sometimes I recall this treatment with humour. Its oddness and injustice amuses me. At other times I feel the scars. Then I recall it with anger. My mind is consumed with a white heat of protest. At least I have learned from it. I am most careful not to injure another person in their mind by neglect or misrepresentation. I think much lasting harm is done by man to man that way. The old are very guilty of that offence against the young. Sometimes youth displays an arrogance to succeed which scars and hurts the pioneer. Of course, the pioneer should be above such hurt. Unfortunately, pioneers are human: and human nature being what it is, none of us are above hurt. I carry many scars that ought not to be there. Which proves that, although I would be great, I am not all greatness. The littleness of the very human, all too human being, insists on peeping out.

Exactly how to explain this strange experience of denunciation, imitation, and neglect, I do not know. It is like a positive that is conditioned by a negative.

In grammar, a positive conditioned by a negative becomes a negative. Speech would be impossible of understanding were it otherwise. In mathematics it is just the same. Multiply one or one thousand by nothing, and the result is nothing. Of course, one can add nothing to a thousand and it remains a thousand. Hence nothing happens. So the experience of which I complain is not mere addition. The negative I indict is not a mere nothing. The experience is more a case of multiplication than of addition. Two experiences are not added. They multiply each other. Yet the grammatical conclusion, and the mathematical result, do not apply exactly. There is something wrong about this statement of the equation.

All this may seem somewhat abstract and so bore the reader. Yet it is not without interest. To be censured or condemned for doing the right thing is not just stagnation. It is death. Something warm with life is killed. It is an ugly fact, like murder. The later conduct of those who murder is another

fact, a cynicism and a mockery. It also is criminal. In numerous ways, one might say almost continuously, I have been the victim of such outrage. The perpetrators of the wrong, although they come to occupy the seats of the great, and to hold dominion over the world, are without vision. As men, they do not exist. They are but beasts of the field, arrayed to look like men. Beasts—with a zest for conquest. Their aim is food, clothing, and shelter. I have ambled through the world, how I do not know; but my aim has *not* been just food, clothing, and shelter. I believe that, to be human, one must possess vision. Loyalty to the vision that is man has been my life. Vision demands liberty and is rebellious.

This rebellion of soul is not violence. It finds no joy in destruction. Its aim is transformation. I do not wish to devastate unduly. I have never shrunk from devastation. There is much to be destroyed.

With me, vision is sovereign. Where my vision is not, I owe no allegiance. At the behest of my vision I am prepared to go to war with principalities and powers, and I feel that I am clothed to achieve victory, protected by an invisible garment that was never made in any tailor's shop.

As a Boy Preacher, I felt myself clothed in this kind of armour. Clothed and protected. This belief explains my growth into manhood. It possesses me as I write. It explains my revolt against the pedestrian biography and autobiography of my contemoraries. It explains my impatience with those who rise from the depths of poverty to the cowardly servitude of those in power. I would sweep these pretenders into outer darkness. Oblivion should become their name.

My purpose in this work is to write about myself. This the reader knows. I aim to explain how I grew into what I am. My desire is to define my thought and its evolution and to state why I consider this thought so important, and such an adventure. The reader can judge the facts and condemn me if I am in error. First, he must know the exact nature of the error, if error there be. He must have the facts before him and not base his conclusion on hearsay. Richard Carlile once said that speaking of one's self is a pleasure at all times. He was right in this observation. Like Carlile, I am not ashamed to expose my past career to the knowledge of all.

It has been said that no one dare write truthfully about himself and that, therefore, all autobiography is false. I am not convinced on this point. I am prepared to write the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about myself. I am hesitant about a few incidents of my experience. They are important: yet to recall them in cold print would harm persons for whom I have a deep regard. For this reason only am I reluctant as yet to tell the story. I do not object to the anecdotage being retailed. It should be, however, so as not to wound, when all parties concerned are dead. Only in these cases am I anxious to withhold the truth.

The story of my life is worth telling completely. My biography has three aspects. These can be conceived as being written in the language of early Christian mysticism, which was adapted from Paganism. I would go back to Sabellius, whose concept of the triune deity became the keynote of Swedenborg's doctrine. Sabellius was challenged by Arius. The poet was challenged by the thinker in prose. Treated as fact, the mystical triune deity is ridiculous. Here we have no objective reality. Subscribed to as mysticism, it is intriguing and expresses much powerful truth.

The Church of Swedenborg is called the New Church, Church of the New Jerusalem. Folk who pass by a New Church will see notices outside about Jesus Christ that read exactly like the notices outside Episcopalian or Presbyterian Churches. Nevertheless, the message is *not* the same.

I do not wish to repeat what I have written in *Historical and Traditional Christianity* and developed in my other studies in Christian origins. It is interesting however to note the thought of Sabellius as taught by the New Church. Sabellius reconciled the deity of Jesus, thereby making him Christ, with the Unity of God.

To Sabellius, God was *one* person, one absolute unity underlying the universe and immanent in the universe. God completed himself in three revelations.

There is a fallacy here because a person *must be a relative being*. A person cannot be absolute. Sabellius conceived of God as the *person* absolute.

As God, the absolute, he was Creation, the Law, the absolute life or being of the universe.

As Christ, he was a ray or beam of light from this absolute, who came to dwell in Jesus. In this way, Jesus became an inspiration to mankind. He was the Son of Man who was

also, for the time being, whilst inspired, the Son of God. The range of the inspiration is greatly exaggerated and thus limits the domain of God considerably. Inspired, Jesus is the manifestation of the Godhead. He is *not* absolute. He is *not* the Godhead.

Jesus dies, as man must die. In life, he spread the influence of his inspiration. The Holy Spirit leaves him because it cannot die in mortal man. The spread of his word spreads the influence of Truth. Except that more than one person could become such a teacher, and could become a centre of inspiration, this is a wonderful philosophical concept of mysticism. It defines much truth but must be embraced practically, not factually. It is the rhetoric of reality; romance, *not* reality.

I apply this doctrine to my thought evolution, to my experiences in the struggle and to my conclusions from those experiences. Once evolved, the thought becomes imperative and dominant. It is the philosophy of one's life, the underlying reality, or absolute.

Then comes the struggle, the making known the philosophy or wisdom. This is the God become flesh, the absolute penetrating the plane of relative existence. It is the manifestation, the agitator, the Son of Man grown into the Son of God.

This manifestation strives and passes. The agitator dies, a mere human. The spirit that reveals itself in his teaching is released by his death. It dwells in the hearts of men and in the cities of men as that vague, indefinable, yet absolute energy—the Holy Spirit! This is the third phase—the post-mortem phase of thought reaction. It has proceeded from the second phase.

The third phase is *not* static nor absolute. It is not even potentially dynamic, as is one's philosophy of life. It is *not* pure happening, for this can be shallow and uninspired, yet rank as action. The third phase is the meeting and merging of philosophy and action. It becomes a complete wisdom of being, action, and repose. It is the happy weaving completed.

In this autobiography I relate the second phase of this weaving. It is not a pedestrian effort. I have walked proudly and consciously along the path of humiliation. Mine is *No Traitor's Gait!*

PART II. I WATCH MYSELF GO BY

Just stand aside and watch yourself go by;
Think of yourself as "he", instead of "I."
Note, closely as in other men you note,
The bag-kneed trousers and the seedy coat.
Pick flaws; find fault; forget the man is you,
And strive to make your estimate ring true.
Confront yourself and look you in the eye—
Just stand aside and watch yourself go by . . .

—STRICKLAND GILLIAN

1. THE WATCH BEGINS

I was born on November 5, 1886, at 24 Corporation Buildings, Farringdon Road, Clerkenwell, London. The birth certificate shows that my birth was registered on December 21, 1886, in the Sub-District of St. James, in the Registration District of Holborn. The birth was registered by my mother, as my father took no interest, either in her welfare or in mine.

If anyone cares to consult the marriage register, they will discover that I was born in wedlock legally and not morally. My mother and father were married at the Church of St. Philip, in the Parish of Clerkenwell, on September 13, 1886—about seven-and-a-half weeks before I was born. My father is described as Alfred Arthur Aldred, bachelor, Dramatist, age 22, of 47 Amwell Street. His father is described as Alfred Aldred, deceased, Fishing Tackle Manufacturer. My mother is

described as Ada Caroline Holdsworth, age 20, spinster, Parasol Maker, 24 Corporation Buildings. Her father is described as Charles William Holdsworth, Bookbinder. Actually, my father never made a home for us. He continued to live at Amwell Street and I was brought up by mother and my maternal grandparents.

I have a very definite memory, my earliest, of visiting my father at Amwell Street, when I was only a few years old. My father never discharged his family obligations and deserted both my mother and myself completely by the end of 1892. Subsequently, both parents contracted bigamous marriages. The certificates of these marriages are utterly false in essential detail. Without any collaboration or association, each parent proved to be an adept at a similar, also parallel type, of mixed recording and the creation of persons who never existed.

Grandfather Holdsworth worked at the old-established firm of Orrin & Geer, at the corner of Bowling Green Lane, right opposite his home. From the front-room window one could see him at work at his bench.

As a child, I loved to look across the street and watch him at work. To me he was a very great man. He still lives in my memory as a great man. Unfortunately, he cannot know that this is so.

It is many years since I visited London and the visit was dreary and depressing. An old man walking round the haunts of his youth seeking to recapture the memories of his past is a creature of mockery rather than of interest. We have lost our sense of sacredness and romance despite all our ceremonies. We mock the past and so burlesque ourselves. At that time I did not visit Clerkenwell. It must be almost a quarter of a century since I returned to Clerkenwell, looked with longing at Corporation Buildings, and felt that somehow they had changed. The balconies seemed to have shrunk, and so real was this illusion that the place was not the place of my youth.

In 1940, an Italian family whose address was 24 Corporation Buildings, told me that the numbers had been changed since I lived there. My birthplace seems to be now number 41 and 24 has been attached to the first block coming up Farringdon Road towards the Post Office. The place where I was born adjoins the present number 24 at the back balcony. Number 24 is now the flat in which my school-friend, Penn, used to live with his parents. I constantly went into that flat over the back balcony.

In my time, the superintendent or caretaker lived in Ray Street. Corporation Buildings extended into Ray Street, which led to Saffron Hill and the Italian Colony, as we termed it. He seems since to have been moved to the 24 in which I was born. The present 24 would not be opposite where my grandfather worked or give me a slanting view of Bowling Green Lane.

The story of my grandfather does not belong to this chapter but I cannot help writing a word about my feelings towards him as I recall myself growing up and beginning to toddle across the front-room. I was nearly five years old before I could walk and I was very late in learning to speak. My mother told me that I was tongue-tied and a small operation had to be performed on my mouth before I did talk. So I actually remember learning to walk—suddenly rising from the floor where I had been crawling; then seizing hold of a chair and drawing myself up; then being coaxed to walk by my mother, my grandmother, and my grandfather. This became symbolic of my grandfather's attitude. He was coaxing me always to walk, to go forward, to make headway. Not in a worldly sense but in the sense of self-development. He was a great and good man. The debt I owe to his memory can never be repaid. If I live long enough, it can be passed on to a rising generation. A poor reward but it is all I can do. I hope that he found happiness in the thought that perhaps I might attempt to do so.

My grandfather was poor and hard-working. One never sensed his poverty. His family never seemed to experience want. My grandmother was a good manager and my grandfather a good and considerate provider. He was most anxious for the well-being of his family. This consisted of four daughters. There had been a son but he died at an early age.

My grandfather was opposed to all corporal punishment. He was patient, thoughtful, and understanding. "Long suffering" is the phrase. And he won by his faith in pursuing this line of conduct. He was calm under all circumstances—but calm, with warmth and consideration. A kindly and loving coolness possessed him. Yet it expressed tremendous and terrible power. As with his family, he was a very good neighbour. He was my pal always and never once did he strike me or

BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION ACT, 1874.

CERTIFICATE of REGISTRY of BIRTH.

I, the undersigned, Do hereby certify that the Birth of

Guy Alfred Aldred

born on the 5th day of November 1886, has been duly registered in my

Witness my hand, this 21st day of December 1886

E W Holliday

Registrar of Births and Deaths.

St James

Sub-District.

London: Printed by Authority of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in England.

COVER.

AUTHOR'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE

(At time of registry of birth. See detailed certificate below.)

REGISTRATION DISTRICT ROLBORN

1886. BIRTH in the Sub-District of Saint James in the County of Middlesex

No.	When and Where born (1)	Name, if any. (2)	Sex. (3)	Name and Surname of Father. (4)	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother. (5)	Rank or Profession of Father. (6)	Signature, Description and Residence of Informant. (7)	When Registered. (8)	Signature of Registrar. (9)	Baptismal Name, if added after Registration of Birth. (10)
112	Fifth November 1886 24 Corporation Buildings	Guy Alfred	Boy	Arthur Alfred Aldred	Ada Caroline Aldred formerly Holdsworth	Dramatic Author	A.C. Aldred Mother 24 Corporation Buildings	Twenty first December 1886	E.W. Holliday Registrar	———

DETAILED BIRTH CERTIFICATE

When the author was prosecuted for alleged sedition in 1909, Sir (then Mr.) A. H. Bodkin said that he was "known by the name of Guy A. Aldred". An eminent K.C. in the High Court of Justiciary, at Edinburgh, made the same remark, several years later. It was made again by the prosecution at Marlborough Street, and for a fourth time at Edinburgh. These certificates answer such suggestions as there has never been any gaps in the author's history.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT SOLBORN

1886 Marriage solemnized at the Church of S.Philip in the Parish of Clerkenwell in the County of Middlesex

No.	When Married. (1)	Name and Surname. (2)	Age. (3)	Condition. (4)	Rank or Profession. (5)	Residence at the time of Marriage. (6)	Father's Name and Surname. (7)	Rank or Profession of Father. (8)
21.	September 13 1886	Alfred Arthur Aldred	22	Bachelor	Dramatist	47 Amwell Street	Alfred Aldred Decd.	Fishing Tackle Manufacturer
		Ada Caroline Holdsworth	20	Spineter	Parasol Maker	24 Corporation Buildings	Charles William Holdsworth	Book-binder

Married in the Church of S.Philip according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by after Banns by me, Alfred T.Fryer

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Alfred Arthur Aldred / Ada Caroline Holdsworth

In the Presence of us, William Smith / Beatrice Elizabeth Holdsworth

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE OF AUTHOR'S MOTHER AND FATHER



The Author's Mother
ADA CAROLINE HOLDSWORTH, 1899

rail at me. A better parent it would have been impossible to find. After a lapse of so many years I hold his memory green.

My mother was one of two daughters who stayed at home. The others married and were constantly making calls on him.

As I grew up I learned, not directly, but from family conversation. that my father considered himself a man of culture compared with my grandfather. My father was a snob with nothing to be snobbish about. He was not only a snob on nothing a year but also with no character for a foundation. I remember seeing him once when I was a boy. My memory is faint as to details but clear as to one outstanding fact. He watched from the window of 47 Amwell Street as my mother and I passed out of his life altogether. This was conduct which has always been beyond my understanding. I remember that his mother gave me a gift of a walking clockwork horse; a clockwork cock that walked and crowed: and a small Noah's Ark, filled with small chocolates. To the boy these were wonderful toys but what poor substitutes for sustenance and affection! The consciences of my father and his mother could not have been of any worth.

It was the year after I left school that I learned of the part played in world-history by many book-binders. My grandfather defended his craft and his fellow-craftsmen to me once after my return from a meeting. I then studied the matter for myself. The result made shoddy of my father's pretensions. In every respect, mentally and morally, the aspiring dramatist was the inferior of the thoughtful, gentle, yet robust toiling man, he despised.

I did not learn the full story of my father's life till 1928, following his death. He had changed his name to Arthur Rosebery. He took his surname, of course, from Roseberv Avenue near which he lived and through which he must have passed often. He was not very original!

So in an illicit kind of way I managed just to be born in what is termed wedlock. This is according to the outlook of patriarchal or male-governed society. Nature takes no notice of such superstitions and false moralities.

2. ENDOWED FOR STRUGGLE

The day was a great day. The cry *"Please to Remember the Fifth of November"* is historic. It relates to the alleged conspiracy to blow up the House of Commons by Guy Fawkes. And, of course, I owe my first name, Guy, to the fact that I was born on this historic day.

I suppose that everyone knows the story of Guy Fawkes. He was born at York on April 16, 1570, and degenerated into a brave but desperate soldier of fortune. To him was left the actual execution of the plot. He was arrested at his post owing to a leakage of information. Put to severe torture, he confessed. The confession did not save his life. He was hanged on January 31, 1606.

The purpose of the plot was to blow up the Houses of Parliament, on November 5, 1605. This was the day on which James I was to open them.

The plot was concocted by a group of discontented Roman Catholics. Of course, the Government made the most of it for political reasons. The conspiracy of the weak was made to serve the conspiracy of the strong. The plot made a great impression on the country at the time. Since then, it has inspired a number of books and pamphlets. When I was born the Gunpowder Plot had become a legend. Its seriousness had been forgotten and it surivived as a tradition to be recalled with humour and mockery. Guy Fawkes was not a tortured conspirator but a figure of fun. His plot was a farce. Still, November 5 was a day of noisy celebration. As I grew up, I correlated my birthday to the events of history. It was a day to be remembered. Certainly, the day's activities made me think of princes. priests, and parliament. I did not become a Roman Catholic. Indeed, I grew into an Atheist. I did not want to blow up the Houses of Parliament. What purpose would that have served? Buildings can be replaced. Reflection slowly convinced me that my task was to destroy the parliamentary system. I came to realise that the institution of parliament was an anti-social talking shop of counter-democracy. Parliament, I realised, was a useless institution. Being born on Guy Fawkes' day brought this

conclusion home to me. The Catholic conspirator had not lived and died in vain. Parliament was to be transformed, or blown up, after all.

The Fifth of November is great for another reason. Eugene Debs, the immortal American Socialist and anti-militarist, was born at Terre Haute, Indiana, on that day. That was in 1855. At the time of my birth, Debs was thirty-one years old. Although Debs started organising the railroadmen when he was twenty, at the time of my birth, he had not become a Socialist. He progressed more slowly mentally than I did, although he proved to be a courageous propagandist and enemy of war. November Fifth was a good day on which to be born. It was indeed a day to remember.

The day, year, place, and circumstances of my birth were portents. 1886 was the famous year of the tragedy of the Chicago Martyrs. The working class of the world was stirred, and has been stirred since, by the events of May Day in Chicago, the police-thrown bomb, the arrest and subsequent execution of the Chicago Anarchists—who were really radical trade unionists, rather than Anarchists. As I was born a great agitation was rising even in London for their release. One of these abortive expressions of Socialism with which the world is familiar.

Clerkenwell was a choice district in which to be born. Probably, every town, every village, and every parish in the world has some greatness in its history. After all, history exists everywhere. Mankind makes history.

Clerkenwell is an ecclesiastic and civil parish in the East Central district of London. The original village sprang up around the priory of St. John of Jerusalem. This was founded by Jordan Briset in 1100. The gatehouse is there still. The name comes from the Holy Well where the parish clerks of London congregated once a year. Clerkenwell symbolises, therefore, the organisation of the Church. It plunges the enquiring mind into a study of the Church and religious tradition. It opens up the gateway of enquiry that leads to scepticism and thought.

Clerkenwell had a sound political history. A Corresponding Society existed there at the time of the French Revolution. It was a centre of Chartist organisation and protest. It was a centre also for the meeting and organisation of Irish Republicans.

Mention of the Irish Republicans recalls the Clerkenwell Bridewell. This was built in 1615 in a street that was known first as Bridewell Walk. The name was changed in 1756, when Rosoman, the builder and proprietor of Sadlers Wells Theatre, built a terrace of houses at the upper end, and called them by his own name. Gradually, the street became Rosoman Street.

I obtained most of my schooling at the Hugh Myddleton School, which borders Rosoman Street. This school was named after Sir Hugh Myddleton, the famous goldsmith and citizen of London who embarked his whole private fortune in 1609, in the wonderful undertaking of establishing the New River Head, whereby water was brought from the springs of Amwell and Chadwell, in Herts, for the supply of London.

The Hugh Myddleton School takes in part of the ground of the Clerkenwell Bridewell. This fact, during my schooldays, led to much investigaton of the history of Bridewell and of political felony in Clerkenwell. It was as much part of my education as anything I learned at school.

Many Catholic priests were imprisoned in the Bridewell. Pepys went there with his wife in 1661 to see a friend of hers who, he states, *"is at school there"*. I often went to school at that site and meditated. I gazed into the past the better to vision the future, though I knew not exactly what I was doing.

Seven years later, probably to their credit as a protest against official injustice, a so-called mob of apprentices attacked the building. This was the second attack by apprentices since the building's erection. Obviously it was viewed as a centre of class oppression.

Richard Baxter, the famous divine who served with the parliamentary army, was held here in durance vile for preaching in his own home at Acton. Baxter was a very brave man. Charles II made him one of his chaplains as an act of appeasement, and would have made him a bishop. Baxter refused. In 1662, the Act of Uniformity drove Baxter from the Church of England. For the rest of his life he was a Nonconformist preacher in London and Acton. He died in 1691, aged 76.

In 1672 the building was burnt down almost. This was supposed to have been the work of a Catholic prisoner. Obviously, direct action. It was rebuilt. In 1757, the prison was in a terrible condition. John Howard visited it many times. It was pulled down in 1804.

To the south of the Bridewell, for nearly a

century, there had existed a New Prison. Jack Sheppard was imprisoned here but escaped by filing his fetters and the prison bars. In 1774-75 the New Prison was rebuilt.

The riots of 1780 brought a public attack on the prison by the mob, who released the prisoners.

In 1818, the year when Richard Carlile was starting on his famous imprisonments in defence of free speech and freedom of the press, the prison was rebuilt on a larger scale. As my mind evolved it seemed to me that this was a significant reply of the ruling class to the thought of the people.

The building was taken down and rebuilt as the Middlesex House of Detention in 1845, during the Chartist period. Then came the unlucky December 13, 1867, when the prison was the scene of a terrific explosion.

During my boyhood, and long after, the story of the Fenians and how the city shook to the blast of the shattering explosion was the subject of much gossip. It was as though I was contemporary with the event. Awed people spoke of the work of a gang of Fenians — led by Michael Barrett — who wheeled a barrel of gunpowder into Corporation Lane (which before my birth had been renamed Corporation Row) and blew up part of the prison wall in the hope of rescuing two Fenian friends, Burke and Casey, who were "inside". Certainly, it was a mad scheme and a pitiful act. The people who attempted it were not "a gang" in the criminal sense in which the term was used. Working people never ought to have used this term. It was a ruling class term and the original fault rested with the British Government and Dublin Castle.

Michael Barrett and his helpers thought their comrades were in the prison yard and would make a swift getaway once the wall fell. A rumour of the rescue plot had reached the ears of the authorities. Consequently, Burke and Casey were in cells far removed from the wall. Otherwise they would have been the first to be blown to pieces. As it was six persons, resident in neighbouring houses, were killed, six more died, and one hundred and twenty were injured. The authorities, with their knowledge, could have averted this disaster. The official desire was not to avert disaster but to capture and to create greater hatred of the Fenians. In this the authorities were successful.

I often went along Corporation Row during my schooldays. Here I learned of the sinister marks on the walls of the small, cramped proletarian houses which showed where the smashed walls had been rebuilt after the explosion.

The fatal barrel of powder had been wheeled along Bowling Green Lane in a harmless-looking coster's barrow.

One man who was a child at the time became a street-seller and was willing to talk about the explosion year after year. He was Albert Henry Abbott and he took to selling matches in Holborn at the foot of Gray's Inn Road. At late as 1935, when he was nearing eighty years of age, he was telling still the story of the Fenian outrage. As I grew up I knew older boys who knew him and I often saw him. He lost his sight in the explosion.

In his last press interview, sixty-eight years after the event, he was telling reporters:

And I live in Clerkenwell still. I'm near Mount Pleasant now, but in those days I lived in Corporation Lane—right on the spot! Born, brought up, and blown up in Corporation Lane!

I was only a tiny mite at the time, of course —but, Heaven bless you, I remember! About four o'clock in the afternoon, it was. There was everything as usual, us kids playing, my mother working about the place—and then hell let loose, as you might say! That's all it seems to me.

I lost my eyes, as you see—my sister Annie was terribly cut about, my other sister, Minnie, she lost an eye and was badly injured besides, and my mother—her face was hurt something cruel.

Down the years, youth, young man, old man, all that Mr. Abbott could think about was the fact that the Government sent £500 by special messengers for the sufferers. Queen Victoria made special inquiries! How easy for the Queen! And there were pensions. One woman was injured in the explosion but lived to be ninety—still living in Clerkenwell and still drawing £20 a year that the Queen allowed her!

"It was the pension that kept her alive," Abbott once said, in evident sincerity and with unconscious irony.

Michael Barrett, of course, was hanged at Newgate. It was Britain's last public execution.

To all the injured poor of Corporation Row what caused the Fenian struggle meant nothing. The pensions, silly inadequate insulting patronage of penury, were regarded as signs of royal generosity and Government

regard. The Government emphasised that the killed and injured were all very poor. So the Fenians had hurt the poor! The Government was not so keen on emphasising how the poor suffer in wars.

Middlesex Detention House was closed in 1877. It might have been forgotten but for the Fenian explosion.

At the time of my birth, the Social Democrats had established a Central Headquarters on Clerkenwell Green, near where Chartists met. This is now Marx House.

Near the S.D.F. Headquarters is the Sessions House, which was descended from, and replaced, the famous Hicks Hall, founded by Sir Baptist Hicks in January 1612. The Sessions House was built in 1779-1780 from the designs of John Rogers. To one who was inspired to think for himself, and was growing into a humanist through his Christian studies, a growing realisation of all the stories the walls could relate if they had but tongues, made the very structure a home of learning. It was a centre of education.

Not far from the Sessions House is Clerkenwell Close in which down the ages many famous persons lived. Some represented literature which is an avenue of and to thought. Here Oliver Cromwell lived for a time. What a vista of history was opened up to the mind of a boy by this incitement to the study of Cromwell, his purpose, and his period! It was not till my first imprisonment in Brixton that a message from Sir Walter Strickland, the 9th Baronet, who had discarded his title, reminded me that the name of Cromwell was associated with that of Strickland and Aldred: and that one of the Aldreds of the Commonwealth period had been a strong Communist.

What an inspiration this association of names was to be at a later time: Clerkenwell, Strickland, Aldred, Communism!

Then Clerkenwell supplied another inspiration which was to influence me during the period that I was growing into manhood and thought adventure.

During 1818, St. John Street Road was called The Road to Islington. This is an exact description as anyone who looks at the map can see. As Richard Carlile went to jail the Road to Islington changed its name to St. John Street Road. Cutting across St. John Street Road and St. John Street Square is Red Lion Street. This preserves the name of the old Red Lion Inn, which was one of the oldest inns in London, and dates from 1415. Red Lion Street was built on its site in 1719.

It was in a room in the old Red Lion Inn that Thomas Paine wrote his immortal *Rights of Man*. This house was visited by James Thomson, the poet, and Dr. Johnson. With all due respect to these respectable worthies, the importance of Clerkenwell consists, to me, in the fact that here Thomas Paine wrote his classic of freedom in 1791-2, after his tremendous service to the cause of the revolting Colonists, the United States of America. Paine's fine vigorous English was the language of Freedom.

Added to the importance of being born in Clerkenwell, rough and proletarian though its appearance may have been, was my name. It was a tremendous threefold name. When the time for my political imprisonment came the authorities doubted its authenticity. It seemed too glovelike. In open court, one prosecutor said "known as Guy Alfred Aldred". I was *not* known as Guy Alfred Aldred. I *was* Guy Alfred Aldred. The Guy has been explained. Alfred was my father's name and his father's name. However unworthy they may have been to enjoy this name it is a bold Saxon name of challenge and freedom. And then Aldred. I shall deal with my surname in another chapter. Here it is sufficient to remember that it also was a Saxon name. It was the name (also spelt Ealdred or Alred) of the Archbishop of York who had a flair for politics and crowned William the Conqueror King of England. He was a loyal kingsman and a traitor to Saxon England. But his name caused thought and a living desire to understand religion and politics.

As I grew up these facts influenced my thought. It was a tremendous incitement to study and to struggle. Here was the centre of the Church calling for examination. Here was a natal day of political conspiracy. Also of current struggle in a great land founded by Anglo-Saxons who believed in liberty of thought and constitutional freedom. A call to the study of law in relation to society. Here was a birth year of living struggle by the poor in that very land founded in liberty—land of struggle across the ocean. My birth facts completed the portent of rebellion. I was impelled, in my early years, to think on my father and mother, my maternal grandfather and grandmother, the meaning of marriage, and the relation of ceremony to moral reality.

The circumstances of my birth did not

make for wealth. My type of mind did not make for the kind of social and economic triumph known as "From Log Cabin to White House", "From Workhouse to Westminster", and that sort of thing. I was to be no Cardinal Wolseley, seeking by learning to become a panderer, and finally a lackey. The circumstances inclining me to study developed a love of scientific approach to truth and a correct assessment of reality.

Thus endowed I entered upon the struggle of existence. Whether it is wise to be born one cannot say. Perhaps it is a folly imposed on each of us. In the sense of being born to struggle, since I was born, it can be said that I was born well. There was a complete correlation of time, place, and circumstance. It may not have been fate. It may have been rather a sad destiny. But there it was.

3. THOUGHTS OF YOUTH

I remember the gleams and gloom that dart
Across the schoolboy's brain;
The song and the silence in the heart,
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on and is never still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long,
long thoughts."

—LONGFELLOW

At the age of five, I was sent to the Iron Infants' School in Farringdon Road. This was on the same side of the road as Corporation Buildings, going towards Roseberry Avenue and Exmouth Street. This school has departed many years but I could go to the exact spot on which it stood. Factory buildings now occupy the site. Here I was very happy, and I recall many incidents of this early schooling with affection. It is almost impossible to think of this, such real experience, having faded into the shadowy past. Even now, as I stand in George Street, Glasgow, and see young children coming home from school, the vision of this Infants' School comes back to me. I recall the teachers, and little incidents that occurred: One day going out for ice-cream for a woman teacher who was very good to all her small pupils: another day in wintertime, carrying a huge piece of frozen snow home, only that it might melt when I got there. It is sad to think that these teachers day by day so real and so earnest, are now mere shadows. I often wonder how life treated them ere they passed away.

Sometimes, in Glasgow, I meet a commissionaire, who also went to this Iron School. He still remembers me as a fellow-pupil—if one may apply that term to a child. My friend has lived in Glasgow many years but remains a veritable "cockney" in manner. He cannot understand my forgetting the name of the headmaster but although I noted it down when he recalled it, I still do not remember it.

The Iron School and its teachers have passed. Only memories, some sad, most of them pleasant, of that which was once so real, so objective, so absolutely a physical fact, remain. At the time, one felt it could never disappear. It seemed so permanent. And yet—!

The Hugh Myddleton Schools were opened formally on December 13, 1893. This vast block stretches from Rosoman Street to Sans Walk. It is surely the greatest monument to his memory for which any human could wish.

Although the formal opening was on December 13, 1893, my impression is that the school was opened actually, and was in normal working order, a few weeks before that date. One had to be seven years old before being enrolled but it must have been that one had to be that age on some certan previous date. I attained my seventh birthday in November of that year but for the purposes of the school's reckoning I was deemed to be younger. My enrolment was a favour. Thus

I was the youngest scholar in the school. On that account, at the formal opening by the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, I was presented to the royal visitor. This was a strange scholastic beginning for one who was destined to become a rabid republican.

The Hugh Myddleton School is now the Hugh Myddleton Secondary (Central) School, controlled by the London County Council. The exact date of my entering this school cannot be obtained as most of the school records were destroyed during the Second World War. Only the records from 1907 onwards were saved. Of course, my enrolment began with the first day the school was opened. My leaving is defined by the date of my grandmother's death, as I continued at school only a short time after that event, which smashed up the home completely. My grandmother died on October 24, 1900. Sometime the following year I left school.

October 24 was a Wednesday. The previous Sunday, October 21, about noon, she had a stroke. She never recovered consciousness. Death, no matter how it comes, means sorrow unless the survivors have no feeling. It compels reflection. This was the first time I had personally experienced the coming of death intimately. The incident at school when a schoolfriend died, had not registered on my mind with the intensity my grandmother's death did.

During the last year of her life, my grandmother and I had become firm friends. Despite her horror at my refusal to go to Church, she regarded me with favour and forgiveness. On Saturday evening, she went for a walk with my mother, my step-father and myself. My grandfather remained at home busy writing up his trade union minutes. During the walk she was in a very happy mood and on our return home, before my mother and step-father left for their house next door to Sadler's Well Theatre, she prepared supper for us all. The death of my grandmother completely sobered my outlook on life.

During the three days that my grandmother lay unconscious, my grandfather became unpopular with his daughters. He insisted on going as usual to work, coming in at the mid-day break and at tea-time, and not going out again till the next morning. His explanation that the rent had to be paid, that other expenses had to be faced, and that therefore he must earn money, were not accepted and unpopular he remained for quite a time.

In his view he was helping more by working than by sitting at her bedside when she was unaware of his presence.

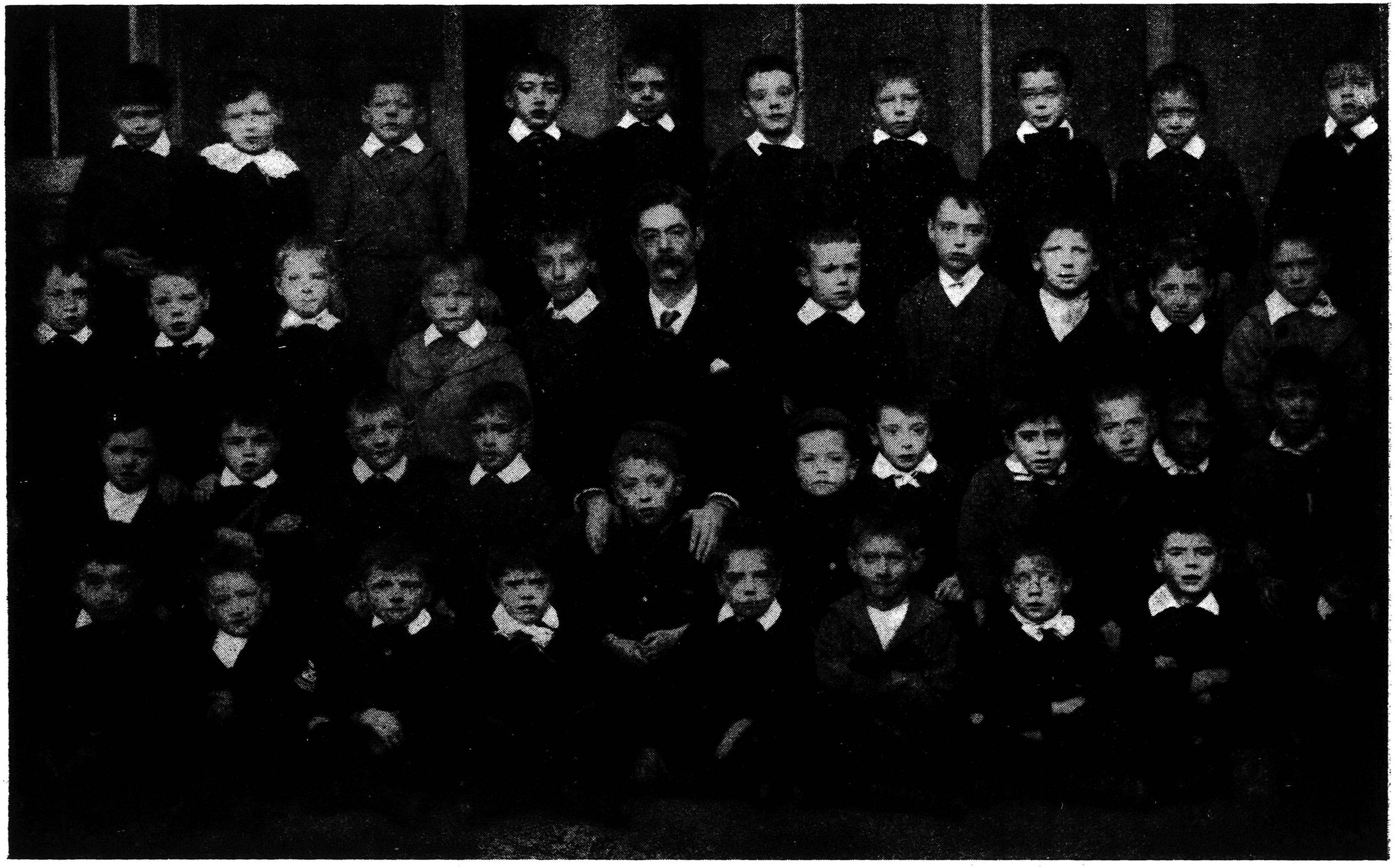
This attitude of his daughters was most unfair. He was completely broken up by my grandmother's death. Within a short period, after years of total abstinence, he tried to drink himself to death. He failed. Eight years later he killed himself by drinking carbolic acid. Only then did his family realise how acutely he missed his wife.

My school career was not too exciting. It had its moments. One of my fellow-students was the son of Jung, the Clerkenwell Watchmaker, who had been associated with Karl Marx in the First International. Jung was murdered by a man who accused him of being a traitor and a police-agent. His death caused a sensation and inspired a lot of discussion about Socialism.

While still under ten years of age, I gave my adherence to certain principles that I have maintained all my life. As a result of some of the boys smoking and inviting me to do likewise, I entered into many discussions on the rights and wrongs of this particular habit, its folly or usefulness. I objected not only to smoking but to the fact that it was engaged in on the sly. Finally, I joined the Anti-Nicotine League. My first adventures in propaganda consisted of keen activity on behalf of this body and recruiting activity for the Band of Hope and Total Abstinence Movement. I forget now the headquarters of the Band of Hope but I believe that it was in St. Peter's Church down some steps along Clerkenwell Road where it approaches towards Holborn. Being so young, I must have said some odd or stupid things. Naturally. I do remember that I had much enthusiasm but no bigotry in the pursuit of the cause of Total Abstinence and Non-Smoking. I remain a convinced abstainer from smoking and alcoholic drinking. I think both habits are injurious. The question is very much a personal one but not wholly so. A drunken husband can destroy all peace in the home and transform it into hell. It is an indulgence rather than a personal whim and can do grave harm to others. This feeling may be a bias from my boyhood from which I have no desire to depart. It would be foolish to do so at this late day, even if the temptation existed. I believe however that it is a social issue of importance and not the mere exaggeration of a tendency I developed in youth.

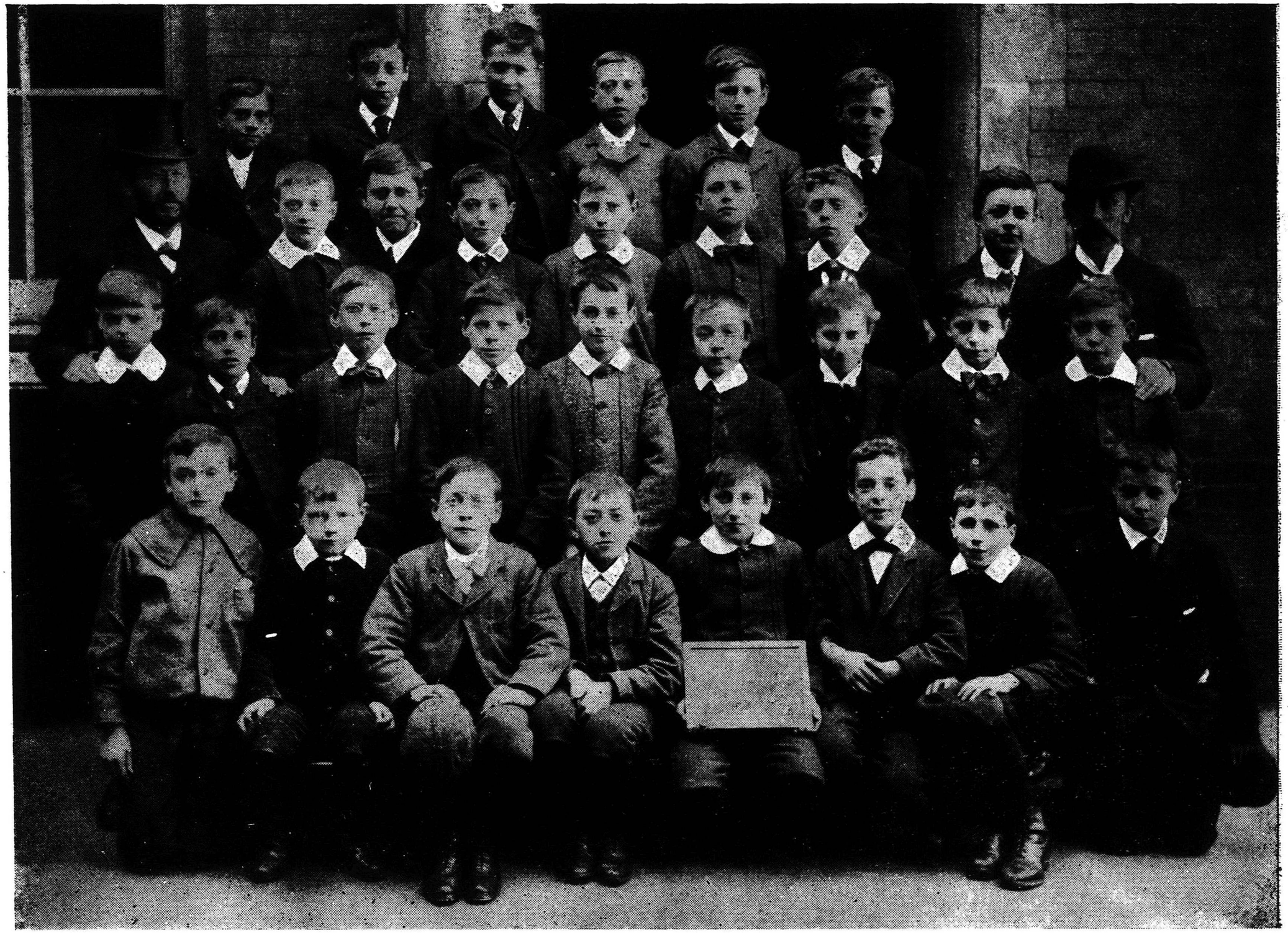
Some success was attained in Mathematics, Scripture, and English. I developed a

CLASS TEACHER AND SCHOLARS OF HUGH MYDDLETON SCHOOL, STANDARD 2, 1894



(Left To Right) Back Row: No. 3, Miller; No. 9, T. Hole. Second Back Row: No. 4, Butchers. Front Row: No. 6, Harry Bromley. The master, Mr. Lamb, has his hands on the author's shoulders.

HEADMASTER, CLASS TEACHER AND SCHOLARS, STANDARD 4, 1896



(Left to Right) Back Row: No. 2, B. Ellson; No. 4, Charley Townsend; No. 6, Gardiner;
Second Back Row: The Headmaster, Mr. Ellson; At end of row, Mr. Howell.
Third Back Row: No. 1, Harry Bromley; No. 9, Hall.
Front Row: No.2, F. Pearl; No. 4, Guy Aldred; No. 8, Styles.

reverence for the English tongue and for the literature of New England. Mathematics I considered a substitute for logic. It interested me as a course of mental study and proposition forming, and not as a prelude to mechanics or applied mathematics. Although I went to woodwork and studied chemistry, practical and theoretical, the studies that influenced me at school were the three already mentioned: Mathematics, as leading to and substituting for formal logic; Scripture, which plunged me privately into studies of Church history; and English. The pursuit of these subjects explains my attitude towards life.

I was concerned in two school fights. This directed my thoughts to "school" and "gang" loyalty. I saw no sense in these activities which, I remember, delighted the other boys. It brought joyous excitement to everyone except myself. I saw no fun in this behaviour and said so. I declined to participate in these fights.

I can recall three private fights in which I was intended to be a principal. The other boys surrounded me, once in the school playground, and twice in Sans Walk outside one of the school entrances, in the hope that I would afford them some excitement. They hoped to cheer and to encourage and maybe jeer. These expectations did not move me. Each time I refused to put up my fists despite jeers. I did not run away. I stood firm. I got struck on one occasion. On the other two occasion, nothing happened. I was simply unpopular and for a short time no one would speak to me. I do not remember being greatly annoyed at this result. To the credit of my schoolmates it must be admitted that there was no great victimisation. Despite my oddities I got on quite well with them.

I bought marbles but played little and in the end gave them all away. For a short time I was fond of the glass marble that had the appearance of twisted coloured ribbon in its centre. Games did not make any especial appeal to me and never have done so. I liked reading and walking. Mostly reading.

I recall a boy named Townsend engaging in some rough playing and being accidentally killed in the school playground. Of course, this caused a lot of talk.

One of my school fellows was Harry Bromley. He left school in August 1900 at the age of fourteen-and-a-half years. Forty-nine years later he wrote me from Slough, where he was living. At school, he was Captain of the Cricket and Football teams. I believe that, for a time, after his family removed to Catford, he loved the Hugh Myddleton School so much that he travelled to it by train on the South Eastern and Chatham Railway. Quite a journey.

Another scholar was E. F. Briscoe, who afterwards did such splendid cartoons for *The Word*. I did not know that Briscoe had been at the Hugh Myddleton School with me till recent years when he recalled the fact. Briscoe is a great black and white artist and his work does honour to the school.

One school scandal I recall. One of the boys was in the habit of buying tea and cakes each night for a number of his mates at the tuck shop patronised by the boys of Hugh Myddleton School. What a talk there was when it was known that he had stolen a considerable sum of money from an uncle! He disappered from the school and no more was heard of him.

Another of my school fellows was Michaels, a Jewish boy whose home I visited at times. Sometime after leaving school, he was arrested for a series of remarkable frauds. He travelled the full length and breadth of the country, impersonating various persons, visiting Theatre managers, and acquiring large sums of money. In all, he must have stolen thousands of pounds in a very short period and finally faced several hundred charges. Most of them were dropped or merely referred to as taken into account. He received a heavy imprisonment and what became of him eventually I never discovered. I suppose his life was a failure. Yet he had great intelligence and was brilliant at his studies. He had a flair for scholarship and good living.

I have related two incidents of what might be termed direct active non-violent resistance. One other school incident, equally direct action, although I did not know the phrase at that time, merits relating. At school there was a singing class which all had to attend. The teacher, a man named Hodges, had the trick of walking round the class-room, up and down the aisles, then suddenly thumping a boy on the back with the idea of impressing upon the boy that he was not keeping in time or was not making himself heard. Now, it was inevitable that if I sang I would be out of time and out of tune. I simply could *not* sing. Nature never intended me to sing. Quite early in my attempts I had realised that if harmony was to prevail in the class-room I would have to be silent. This was my custom during the singing period. But what

did an ignorant school-teacher know about this simple fact?

There came the day when, during his walk through the class-room, Mr. Hodges realised that I was *not* singing. He thumped my back. I waited till he got to the front of the class and turned to face the pupils. As he faced us, I let fly with my inkwell. It struck the blackboard behind him. There was a terrible row. In great indignation he reported the matter to the headmaster. There was a full inquiry. No punishment came my way and Mr. Hodges never got the chance to thump me on the back again. I was excused singing. I should never have been sent in the first instance. But Authority takes no heed of the individual. It loves to threaten and to exercise its power. Although quiet and simple, even at that age, authority and force did not impress me. When necessary I was prepared to revolt. I did not need to read Paine's *Rights of Man* to assert the rights of scholars. Actually, at a later date, my school experiences inclined me to read *The Rights of Man.*

The incident of the back-thumping and the inkwell brings to mind another experience that occurred outwith school time but during that period. Maybe this happening was the explanation of the revolt against thumping. My mother wanted me to be cultured. I smile now at her anxiety in this direction. And so she bought me a violin, arranged for me to have a course of lessons. With the money for the first quarter's payment in advance I set off for the house of the music teacher. I gave him the money. He started my first lesson. I had barely started to follow his instruction when he stopped me. Taking the money I had given him from the mantlepiece where he had placed it, he put it into my hand.

"Here," he said. "Don't come back. Give the money back to your mother. It's a crime to take it from you!"

I was at school still when, at the age of thirteen I was confirmed. This is the only time I visited St. Paul's Cathedral. I never had the desire to visit "great" places. Even the Tower of London, despite its historical associations, never moved me to visit it on a sight-seeing expedition. The strange thing is that, within a few weeks of being confirmed, I refused to attend the Church of England services any more. For five years I had gone with my grandfather regularly twice each Sunday. For fifty years he had been a member of the Church of St. Anne & St. Agnes, with St. John's Zachary. I did not break completely with the Church then. I just did not want to go every Sunday as a routine matter.

My grandmother was scandalised. Yet I never knew her to attend Church. Her excuse was that domestic duties made Sunday a busy day. My mother was upset, although she, too, never attended Church. She saw the Cross of Christ slipping from my hands. She was a good mother, and really splendid to me, as was my grandmother, but I think she would have been better advised not to be so squeamish about my religious behaviour. The Cross of Christ had done a little slipping in her own case, although I do not think the result had been to her moral hurt. Only my grandfather was practical. Within the family my pet name was "Dady". Seemingly this had stuck because of my insistence in childhood of calling my hands "dadies". "Well, Dady," said my grandfather, "is it true that you don't want to come with me to Church?" "Yes, grandather." I replied. "Very well! Don't come," he said and turning to my grandmother and my mother, "Leave the boy alone. If he doesn't wish to come, there's no sense in him coming. It would be an outrage to force him to go to Church against his will." And that was that!

The South African war broke out towards the end of my schooldays. How my schoolfellows jeered at me for declaring that my grandfather was pro-Boer!

Looking back, I realise what is due to his encouragement. How he assisted my mental development without once imposing any ideas of his own is a wonderful study in education as practised by a man who made no cultural claims. He was inspired by a radical liberalism of mind that was the essence of unpretentious commonsense.

Between the period of going to the Iron School and being enrolled at the Hugh Myddleton School my mother insisted on visiting my father's mother in Amwell Street with the purpose of forcing some support for me. On this point, Grandfather Holdsworth was completely opposed to my mother. He thought her conduct in this matter was undignified and that he could support me without help from my father. In this attitude he was applauded by my grandmother. Great was my mother's indignation. She persisted in these visits, usually taking me with her. There were no quarrels between my mother and her parents but they held that this conduct was equivalent to begging and that she

ought to be superior to it. My mother, who loved me and did everything possible to make me happy, working very hard to this end, thought I ought to have the best of everything and that my father should share the responsibility. I agree with my grandparents' attitude but I understand the viewpoint of my mother.

On April 4, 1897, my mother contracted a bigamous marriage with George Daniel Stray. They met on a bus as she was on her way to work. Soon after he came to live with us as a boarder. In some strange religious way, my mother considered it was right to be "married" in a register office but not in Church. A strange outlook.

Married, my mother moved from Corporation Buildings to a house next door to Sadler's Well. I remained with my grandparents but during the school dinner break I ran from one house to the other before returning to school. In the evenings I would visit my mother and then return to Corporation Buildings to sleep. When my grandfather gave up the tenancy of the house I went to live completely with my mother. When she moved to Goswell Road my grandfather came to live with us for a time.

With the death of my grandmother about this time, the atmosphere of home life changed. My mother had another family growing up and I ceased from being the centre of her interest. Things were not the same.

So the thoughts of my youth became indeed long, long thoughts. I was thoughtful from a very early age and the events in my home and at school caused my thoughts to reach out towards Utopia and so to vision the land of man's eternal prophecy and desire. The vision that came to me in those far-off days has remained. It has but matured with the years. Some part of the concept has developed from vague imaginings into a well-defined promise of reality. I know that it was no mirage. I saw in those schooldays a true, though perhaps crude and immature, approach to a real understanding of life and its struggle. I look back to the days of my youth and all the thoughts to which those events gave birth, with a deep sense of gratitude. I was born to be a sower and the seed I was destined to sow was not dragon's teeth, the seed of false glory.

The boy's will was indeed the wind's will, for it carried me without effort, and despite every obstacle, along the strange and marvellous journey of revolutionary idealism. I had no assets other than that of good determination. Hunger: Vision: Determination. A perfect triune providence of achievement. The deity that inspires absolute love and loyal service of Truth regardless of every personal consideration.

Looking back, I recall the feeling that inspired me to describe myself, in one of my youthful essays, as "a citizen of the bright tomorrow warring against the sordid criminality of the transient today". The description was correct but the transient evil has not passed. And so the spirit of youth remains with me in my age to continue the great and glorious struggle. Mankind yet has to enter into the promised land.

Another poet, more bitter than Longfellow in his hatred of orthodoxy in the home and

REGISTRATION DISTRICT HOLBORN

1897. Marriage solemnized at the Register Office in the District of Holborn in the County of London

No.	When Married. (1)	Name and Surname. (2)	Age. (3)	Condition. (4)	Rank or Profession. (5)	Residence at the time of Marriage. (6)	Father's Name and Surname. (7)	Rank or Profession of Father. (8)
158	Fourth April 1897	George Daniel Stray	26 years	Bachelor	Umbrella Warehouseman	24 Corporation Buildings Clerkenwell	Benjamin Herbert Stray	Plumber
		Ada Caroline Aldred	29 years	Spinster	Sunshade Trimmer	24 Corporation Buildings, Clerkenwell	Charles Aldred	Book Binder

Married in the Register Office according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the by Certificate before me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, George Daniel Stray, Ada Caroline Aldred

in the Presence of us, John Salton Beecroft, Edward Charles Walters

J.J.Sibley Registrar
Arthur W.Hill
Superintendent Registrar

MOTHER'S BIGAMOUS MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

(Note mixture of truth and falsehood.)

priestcraft in society, has described the child as father to the man. I accept the description in the poet's sense and also in a kindlier sense. I see the promise of the thinker and the heretic, the truthseeker and the discoverer, in the child. I see sweetness and light, not darkness and the sin of authority. I see the child maturing into the man. Here is no cause for bitterness but rather rejoicing. That the child is father to the man, is, in my experience, not a matter for lamentation but for exaltation. The thought should find expression not in the moaning tones of a dirge but should swell with gladness into the rich volume of the anthem. The child should be the father to the man.

In this spirit of struggle towards Utopia, as being a real place on the map of human endeavour, I look back to the days of my youth. Then it was I learned to ask why and to refuse to bow before the false god of destructive authority.

The second number of *No Traitor's Gait!* will deal with the author's activity as a Boy Preacher; his conversion to Theism and association with the late Charles Voysey, the founder of the Theistic Church; his Total Abstinence campaign; the Clerkenwell Freethought Mission; and his Social Democratic agitation.

To cover the cost of this work it is necessary to have 1,000 subscribers for the 12 numbers into which this autobiography is divided. Will you subscribe? 12 numbers, post free, 7s. 6d. Send now. It will help considerably. The price being charged does *not* cover the cost of production. Payment in advance helps to atone for the loss. Fill in the subscription form enclosed and send by return.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE STRICKLAND PRESS, GEORGE STREET, GLASGOW

NO

TRAITOR'S GAIT!

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GUY A. ALDRED

IN TWELVE MONTHLY NUMBERS

Number Two - - JANUARY 1956

1956

The Strickland Press, 104 George Street, Glasgow, C.1

CONTENTS

PART II. I WATCH MYSELF GO BY
(concluded)

4. Decisive Years
page 29

5. Anglican Communion
page 31

6. My Grandfather's Influence
page 35

7. Woman's Rights' Aftermath
page 37

8. The Bible and Nick Carter
page 39

9. My Debt to the Rajah
page 41

10. The Boy Preacher Evolves
page 42

APPENDICES

1. The Religions of the World
page 46

2. The Last Days
page 48

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Boy Preacher
page 27

Charles William Holdsworth
page 35

Oom Paul Kruger
page 36



The Boy Preacher
GUY A. ALDRED, in 1902

PART II. I WATCH MYSELF GO BY—(*Concluded*)

4. DECISIVE YEARS

The period during which I reached definite conclusions concerning the social and moral importance of the Church opened with the bigamous marriage of my mother in 1897 and ended with the death of my grandmother in 1900. "Events," once wrote Dyer D. Lum, the American Individualist Anarchist, "are the true schoolmasters". Events were my schoolmasters. These two events transformed me from the schoolboy to the youth of thoughtful and independent mind. To understand what the changed circumstance of my mother's marriage, and my grandmother's death meant to my development, it is necessary to vision my home as it was prior to the first event and to depict the years of transition.

My memory is vague regarding the years before 1893. That my mother and grandparents were good to me is clear. I had a sense of happiness and security which, had it not been so, would have been impossible. I can recall being taken yearly from 1893 to 1897 by my mother to "Our Boys" clothing store at King's Cross and being bought a complete outfit. Usually it was what is called a Norfolk suit which I liked very much and is, roughly, the type of suit I wear still. In 1898, she managed to do this for the last time. Jokingly, my mother said she must get everything necessary to make me feel "a young toff". Then, in 1899, she took me to a "misfit" shop in Clerkenwell. After that, the yearly suits ended. Grandmother took on the outfitting and in 1900, just before her death, she bought me another Norfolk suit. Her idea was to replace the loss of my mother's attention to me and also from sympathy with my mother. This desire she was fated not to realise.

After my grandmother's death I began to buy my own "misfits". Only my purchasing became irregular. The annual outfitting had always taken place about Christmas but fortunately for me, and I believe for her own sense of great happiness, my grandmother had not waited till Christmas time. Grandfather was no good at buying clothes. Food, yes! Clothes, no! He had no interest in them.

As I write I think of my grandfather's good, clear handwriting. Apart from what he termed his "copperplate" writing, his ordinary writing was excellent. He was jealous of the education of his daughters and weekly he paid out a small sum for the schooling of each. My youngest aunt, a handsome, well-built young lady, would not go to school. It was a family joke, how, whenever school was mentioned, she came out in spots. Later, when it was suggested that she should start to work, the same thing happened. She was about eleven years older than I was but she could neither read nor write. Strangely enough, she was the only one of the four sisters who made a successful marriage. Married, she broke with her family completely. Which was not to her credit for her parents had taken every care of her. Only once did she request instruction in writing. She asked me to teach her to write her name. This was for the sole purpose of signing the marriage certificate!

My grandfather was a man of powerful build. He worked hard at his bookbinding but he had realised that his wages from that source could not keep his family. Consequently he became an agent, in his spare time, for a then much-advertised ointment —Homocea. I remember well its slogan: *Homocea touches the spot!* In this work, my grandfather was quite successful and he despatched daily a large number of packages. From the money that he earned, a small sum was taken for books and snuff. The rest went into the house. His agency for Homocea certainly helped to keep the home fires burning.

In addition to his work and his agency, he was, also, the honorary branch secretary of his trade union for a number of years.

My grandmother was also engaged in the book-binding trade. My grandfather's firm supplied her with a machine for putting on a part of the headbanding, to work at home. He brought the work to her and when it was done, took it back. At this she worked hard in the evenings. Grandfather collected her pay and faithfully brought it home to her. He was most scrupulous in this matter.

The cultural influence of my grandfather was strengthened, although neither they nor I realised the fact at the time, by the attitude towards me of two teachers at the Hugh Myddleton School.

I have referred to my interest in mathematics and that interest explains much of my subsequent mental progress. Certainly, it stimulated my love for truth. In my last year at school I was in a mixed class, boys and girls, totalling only fifteen. This was very different from some of the overcrowded ones in which I had previously found myself, either keeping back scholars quicker at learning than I was, or being kept back by boys of slower learning. Equally bad either way.

The mixed class was for mathematics and was taken by a Mr. Griffiths, a small man with a beard. He taught with great earnestness, simplicity and assurance. With the pupils, he was a patient, careful and kindly man. Each point was explained clearly and distinctly. It was a joy to be in his class and I feel that his patience and teaching helped me in no small measure.

Another teacher who, I feel, helped me a great deal, was the man who taught Chemistry. Although English-born, he was of German extraction. Both he and his wife had a sincere friendship for me. I went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hietifutz on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons. This was in Champion Grove, somewhere off Denmark Hill. These visits were not for formal instruction but were more in the nature of chatty discussions and they proved of real value.

Despite his English birth, Mr. Hietifutz was a German patriot. To him, England was an alien land. This sense of belonging elsewhere made him almost Pacifist in his outlook. His first love was the Germany of his parents. His second England, the land where he lived. I do not suppose he was ever aware of his influence upon me in the direction of Pacifism but I believe he helped to strengthen my feeling against militarism. Many the time, after I left school, did I ponder over these talks I had had at the home of this teacher. I came to understand that his Pacifism was a sort of inverted patriotism. This was a real lesson in considering not only the truth of what a person said, but the motive of his saying it. This was a most valuable introduction to motive analysis. The boyhood "Why?" was the beginning of maturity. The student was evolving into the would-be teacher. Soon, I was to become a Boy Preacher.

Boyhood was not all study. I had my light relief. Yearly, my mother and my grandparents took me to a pantomime at Christmas time at the old Surrey Theatre. At this theatre, the main attraction as Widow Twankey, or some other such character, was George Conquest. This was the father. The son, also George Conquest, followed in his father's footsteps but he never attained the position enjoyed by his father. To me these pantomimes were the height of pleasure. With my stepfather another member was added to our party in the years 1897 and 1898. Our enjoyment was wholehearted. My desire to study in no way prevented my very keen happiness in outings such as this.

Study was important, however, and I sat for a scholarship and passed the preliminary examination. I never went up for the final examination. During the interval, I had read a book by Peacock, lent by my grandfather, that, in the form of a novel, completely "debunked" examination. Also with my grandfather, there had been long talks on what I intended to do should I pass the final examination. Success, he said, was the gateway to professionalism. Did I want that? No, that was not the path I saw ahead of me. My grandfather's talks completed the disillusion begun by Peacock's book. I determined not to follow the path of professionalism.

I have never been able to understand the attraction my stepfather must have had for my mother. Although he worked in a warehouse in the umbrella business, my mother did not meet him through her work. The meeting was accidental. This strange romance began on a bus. George Stray was the son of a master plumber and his home was in Hill Street, Peckham. This was a long way from his work in the heart of London and, as the friendship between him and my mother grew, she proposed that he should become a "lodger" in her home. My grandparents were not taken with this suggestion but in the end, they consented. The friendship turned to courtship and from that to "marriage".

My mother's arguments with her parents on this proposed "marriage" had a peculiar insincerity. She contended that, as my father was still living, she could not marry in church. The second marriage would not be a sacrament in the sight of God. It could only be a contract. She could not possibly live with my step-father without "marrying" him. Her

legal husband, my father, had deserted her since before my birth. Seven years had passed since that time, therefore she was free to marry. Very often, an argument such as this is advanced by the poor to justify their acts, but it is all nonsense legally.

Actually, my mother's actions proved that she did not believe the stuff and nonsense she had urged to my grandparents. The bigamous marriage certificate, in which she falsified her maiden name,* wipes out of existence both me and her own father. *She knew she was wrong.* But the desire she had for my step-father had taken complete possession of her honesty of mind.

My grandfather made no fuss once her course of action had been determined. He was opposed to it. Both her parents said so simply and directly. For them, that was the end of the argument. She did what she wanted. And, of course, her action made a great change to my life.

Down to the year 1897, she had been a devoted mother. She remained a good mother but it was casually so. My grandmother took her place. Now my mother's devotion was for her husband and, as they were born, my half-brothers. Her time and care were now given to them.

Since the day he met her, my stepfather had always been thoroughly honest with her. Whatever his faults and despite his ignorance, to her he was always truthful. She knew he drank—mainly on Saturday afternoons. He liked the company of barmaids. Horror of horrors, so far as my grandfather was concerned, he was in the Volunteers!

There would be Saturdays when he was to be seen marching through the street, parading bravely in his volunteer uniform with such a military air. Away my mother would go to see the show and cheer and wave. Her cheers were for him. He was all she saw in that gaudy display. Standing 5 foot 11 inches, Private G. D. Stray, with his pointed well-waxed moustache, filled her horizon. I could never understand why, if my mother had to commit bigamy, she selected such a dull and unimaginative person for her partner in crime!

*See Number One, page 23

5. ANGLICAN COMMUNION

I love the Church of England,
I love its holy hush;
I love to kneel before my God
On cushions of red plush.
—Anon.

In my youth I recited these lines quite a lot. I am afraid that I am not original in my recitations. A jingle of some kind comes into my head from my reading—sometimes it is true poetry; at other times, senseless doggerel—and for a while I repeat it again and again to the annoyance of my associates. Of course, they protest. Then, out of deference to their feelings, the recitation is dropped. Unfortunately, some other rhyme comes to mind, and they are bored with a new quotation, which is meant really for myself, and not for their hearing at all. Only one cannot talk to one's self in company without being overheard by the company. It is a bad habit. I make no apology for it. Reciting to myself, and thinking aloud, have been characteristics of mine since boyhood. Most times, the recitation was not quite perfect. This still happens. My mind does not express itself easily in memory tests. It has to assimilate and to digest. Whatever I was destined for by nature, if I was intended to be anything at all, it was not to be a parrot. I can speak. I can think. I cannot recite. Many of those with whom I was associated in my youth have succeeded in the world because they knew always the exact moment when to say: "Pretty Polly"! That has been their one great accomplishment, an open sesame to fame and wealth. I could never say "Pretty Polly". I had to be my own man—and a failure!

I came across this Church of England jingle when I was fairly young. It stuck in my mind because it was false to my thought. I did not love the Church of England. I was interested in it. Many of its priests and their writings intrigued me.

I did not like its holy hush because I never

remember being awed by the unknown. To my mind, as far back as I can think, this seemed to be like being afraid of the dark. I thought it was foolish to be afraid of the dark. If one was in the dark, and if light was unobtainable, it was dark and that was the end of it. The dark did not call for a song and certainly the awe did not require expression in reverence. How could one reverence the dark? It was like glorifying ignorance.

No! I did not like the holy hush. Actually, I did not like hush at all, holy or unholy.

I did not love to kneel before my God, for I did not like to kneel at all. In my most orthodox boyhood, even when I was quite a minor, I did not desire to kneel. At Church, I often sat forward but did not kneel. On other occasions, I did kneel partly, and certainly, to my shame, made a pretence of kneeling. This conduct meant war within myself. I felt that we ought not to kneel. Reverence, expressed in kneeling, never was my attitude of mind.

The cushions were a feature of the churches I attended during my youth. Those at St. Anne's & St. Agnes' were elegant. It was a suggestion of luxury that seemed out of place.

For these reasons the verse stayed in my memory. I recall the story that explained the rhyme. A small girl, reared in a very severe nonconformist region of the United States, had been visiting relatives in London. These relatives were Church of England and she was taken to Church in a very fashionable quarter of London. In due course, the child returned to her home in the backwoods of America. Her mother was eager to know what her daughter had thought of the fine churches in London. These lines were her reply.

Whenever I recall my young days in the Anglican Communion, this rhyme jumps into my mind.

In 1894, at the wish of my grandfather, I became a member of the Church of St. Anne & St. Agnes, Gresham Street, London, near the London General Post Office. My grandfather did not say I must go. He wanted me to go and he was very pleased with my willingness to go. Very simple actions gave him a good deal of pleasure. He more than deserved this small service that I was willing to render him.

Since 1894, the site of the Post Office has changed. As with other long-remembered places there have been vast extensions and alterations. At the time when I was familiar with it, the place covered so much ground that it was like a small village, a complete district in itself.

I last saw St. Anne's & St. Agnes' the year before the outbreak of the anti-Hitler war and I was struck by its situation. It seemed even more lost than it did in the days when I attended it twice every Sunday in the years long ago.

My grandfather's pleasure in my assenting to his wishes was partly because he had been reared in the neighbourhood. Then the district consisted of dark lanes and narrow streets. For almost fifty years he had been a member of this one church. I could understand the pleasure he felt as I accompanied him to the morning service and then to evensong. It linked him with his childhood. Together we would stroll, the elderly man and the boy, sometimes talking, sometimes silent, but always with a sense of companionship and mutual fondness.

When I first attended St. Anne's & St. Agnes' church, the rector was the Rev. Prebendary Joseph Reynolds, M.A But soon after, he died and was succeeded by the Rev. Septimus Buss, LL.D. Under this rector I was confirmed and admitted to the partaking of Holy Communion. Strangely enough, Buss was related to the Rev. Charles Voysey, who was to convert me to anti-Christian Theism, and incidentally convince me that Holy Communion was *not* holy and was *not* Communion. My grandfather had his own opinion on this matter. In some ways he was a strange man, who was always one jump ahead of me in my mental development. Up to a point he was secretive —then suddenly he would expand. In this way, he developed my knowledge of religion and philosophy and at the same time he certainly furthered my heresies of outlook.

He rejoiced in my departures from orthodoxy. Often I felt that he was chuckling to himself at the range of my thoughts. In whatever direction I inclined, he warned me always that I had not reached the full logic of that thought, and must go still further. While he was thus encouraging me to heresy, he attended, most faithfully, and always to time, the Church of St. Anne & St. Agnes, every Sunday, morning and evening. As I looked at him, all ready to set out—his carefully brushed high hat set firmly on his head, his starched white dickie gleaming between the lapels of his jacket, his general appearance so sedate and respectable—I often smiled at the memory of some previous discussion

we had had. From his style as he walked to church, one would never have suspected that the least glimmer of doubt ever crossed his mind.

But on his return home after morning service! Off would come the high hat! The dickie and the tie got crumpled in his haste to tear them loose. Flinging these badges of respectability from him, he would invariably exclaim: "Thank God, that's over!" Then on would go his "choker" as the family called his scarf, an old cap replaced the high hat, and so dressed he set out on his usual walk round Saffron Hill till dinner time. Sitting down to the dinner, the preparation of which had made it impossible for my grandmother to go to church, we would all remain silent and wait for his remark: "This is the finest dinner I've ever tasted!" The dinner, by his way of it, was better each Sunday. But one Sunday as we sat waiting for his approval before beginning on the silverside of beef put on the table proudly by my grandmother, his exclamation was somewhat changed. Taking his first mouthful, he beamed: "This is the finest dinner I've ever tasted!" Then: "Good God, Em! The meat's bad!" And so it was. Next Sunday that was forgotten and the Sunday dinner once more became "the finest dinner".

During the afternoon his pleasure was to read aloud to the family. This was usually some classic, often a work of Dickens whose writings he loved. Sometimes it was one of Thackeray's, whom he admired greatly. He preferred Dickens for his low life presentations but he was amused by Thackeray's accounts of high life humbug and romance. The sins of the poor, as well as their virtues, gave enjoyment to my grandfather. And then he knew and loved the London that Dickens portrayed. A London that is now no more.

So the afternoons would pass. Every now and then, my grandfather would pause in his reading. Addressing himself to my grandmother who was quietly dozing in her armchair, he would say: "Em dear, did you hear that?" The pause in the soothing reading would waken her. Her eyes would open long enough to reply: "Yes Charles dear. Every word." Her eyes would close once more and he resumed his reading but both Charles and Em knew that his reading was to Em but a lullaby—without which she would not have slept.

Too soon the pleasant afternoon was gone and again came the preparation for church.

Mr. Buss was a very old man and the services he conducted commanded only a small attendance. Nevertheless he aided me very much. Looking back to these services, I recall the famous Laracor sermons of Dean Swift. On more than a few occasions, only the sexton was present. Swift changed the service to suit the audience and would solemnly recite: *"Dearly beloved brother, the Scripture moveth us"*, etc. "Brother" replaced the "brethren" in the official Church service. I believe that, unconsciously, and despite his terrible orthodoxy, Mr. Buss assisted my mental growth so much, that it was just as if the service was being conducted solely to make me think. I was the "dearly beloved brother"! I could never understand the "brethren" of the Anglican Communion who merely took the service as part of the run of life. To me, each service was a lesson. They were concerned with worship. I was anxious to understand and to learn.

Many of my grandfather's relatives were in Holy Orders, as the Church says. He himself was partly Jewish. On his mother's side, there were a few rabbis in the family. On his father's side, they were Anglican communicants. However, this division was not clear cut for on his mother's side he had a cousin named Hart with whom I was intimate. At one time, as I remember it, Hart was converted at a Lamb and Flag Mission. What a dreadful name! As a result, he was sent to Cambridge University where he scraped through his examinations without displaying too much brilliance. But that did not prevent him becoming a very popular preacher. As a curate at Holloway, he became all the rage. He was very High Church and, in everything but avowed allegiance, a member of the Church of Rome. In due course he became Vicar of Deptford and as such was most comfortably placed. I fell foul of him over a total abstinence meeting at which he was to be the main speaker. Before leaving for the meeting, great was my astonishment to see him pouring out for himself a glass of whisky. And, although I was quite young, inviting me to have a drink also. I viewed the man as a hypocrite and told him so.

Hart was looked upon as an example, in the matter of success, by most members of the family. A family conclave decided to make various sacrifices in order to send me to a university with the aim of my becoming a Priest of the Church. This dream was not to be realised.

My tendency to think, in the sense of

challenging theological tenets and advancing philosophical conclusions, was not to blame. It was the narrowness of the Church outlook of the time. I associated with nonconformists and I believed that a nonconformist minister had as much right to the title of "reverend" as a priest of the Church of England—or of Rome, for that matter. I could not conceive of God as exclusively a member of the Church of England. Also I was beginning to feel the desire to preach. I did not want merely to talk about total abstinence and non-smoking. I wanted to preach. The story of the boy, Jesus, in the Temple had seized hold of my imagination. The Anglican Communion did not hold with Boy Preachers. The preacher, according to its members, had to be trained, pass absurd examinations on certain subjects, answer laid-down questions on theology in a fixed and unoriginal form, and worst of all, the applicant must have reached the age of twenty-three, before he could graduate into the priesthood. It seemed to me that Jesus would have got nowhere if he had had to serve his apprenticeship in this way. So I disappointed my relatives and toyed with the idea of Boy Preaching. In this matter I was in advance of the clerics of my youth.

Few Anglican clerics today would defend the narrowness which tended to render continued Anglican Communion impossible for me shortly after my confirmation. This heresy of tolerance and wide communion was my first crime as an Anglican. My crime was a real belief in Protestantism. This led to unforgivable associations. I mixed with persons who called themselves Christians first, and secondly, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and such like. Later, of course, I came to despise the narrowness of even these Nonconformists. They, on their part, insisted that a Unitarian could not be a Christian. Actually, I consider the Unitarian to be a sounder Christian than any of the Trinitarians. That, however, was a later development.

I attended the Wednesday noonday services conducted by Mr. Buss at St. Anne's & St. Agnes' after I had long ceased attending on Sunday. As late as 1902, I still went to them and a series of lectures delivered by Mr. Buss on "The Religions of the World" made a strong impression on me.

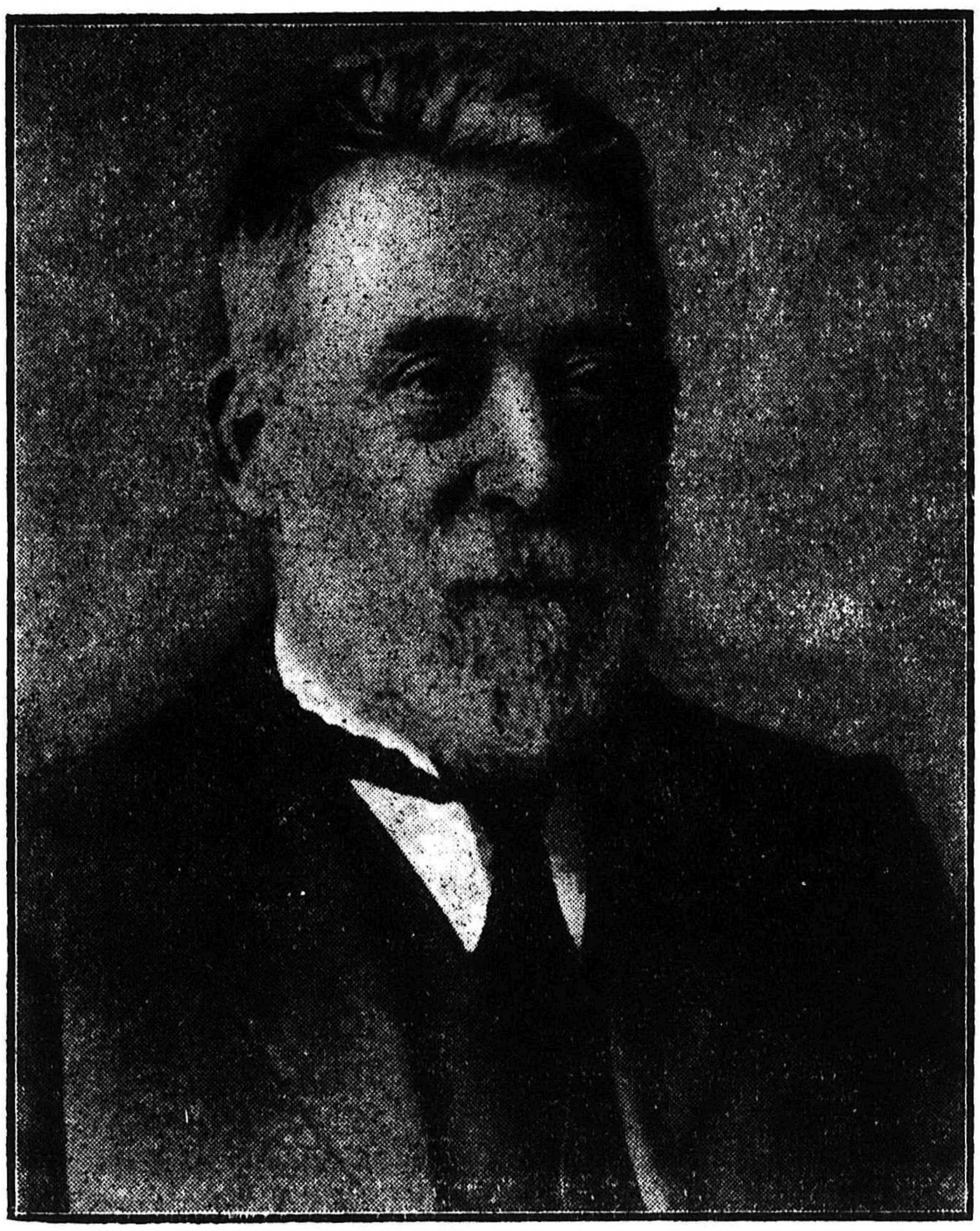
Stating my position as regards the Anglican Church down to 1900, I would say that I felt little objection to the Church service. It did represent some communion of fellowship in the presence of the Unknown. That was good. It could give grace and spiritual strength to the individual. I was doubtful as to the urgency or the necessity of many of the ecclesiastical ceremonies. I had no taste for fixed collects, prayers, or order of services. To my mind, they had no special bearing on religion and were too often solemn in appearance only. They were a ritual that did not spring from the emotions. They were a mere recital that could never blossom into an anthem of the soul.

Long faces, and nobly sad hearts, never go well together. In time, I was to learn that this was as true of nonconformists as of the State Church worshippers. The static and regulated prayers of the Church Established do not help matters. Hypocrisy, like any other sin, is not exorcised by ritual. Quite early during my attendance at St. Anne's & St. Agnes', I realised that the Church was not the place where men and women assembled in entire forgetfulness of themselves, to worship at the sacred altar of Truth. They went to Church as a prelude to gathering to gossip outside, to parade themselves in their Sunday best with the purpose of impressing their neighbours. Their failure to be sincere I attributed to man's hypocritical heart, to a sort of double-dose of original sin. I do not think now that such an explanation relieves God of the responsibility for this parade of vice—for hypocrisy is vice—if God exists, as the theologians aver. I did not consider that the respectable fashion of conventional assembly was due to the influence and organisation of the Church. I still had to get down to the economics of the business.

Gradually, I came to understand that the Church was not the fount of wisdom though I endeavoured to cling to it as an avenue to knowledge. Alas! Even here the Church proved useless and this despite the many great scholars it has produced.

6. MY GRANDFATHER'S INFLUENCE

Although my grandfather tended to belittle the importance of examinations as an evidence of knowledge, it must not be concluded that he was opposed to study. I know and have known men with all manner of scholastic degrees; but I have never met a man who loved learning more than did my grandfather. He believed in scholarship, but he scorned to accept conventional standards or approaches. All his outward conformities were thrown aside for the false pretences they were when



The Author's Grandjather
CHARLES WILLIAM HOLDSWORTH, in 1899

an actual problem of scholarship and understanding arose. He ranked wisdom higher than mere knowledge.

His influence on my development falls into three distinct periods. The first was whilst I was at school and before the death of my grandmother. The Boer War started towards the end of that period and here I was linked to my grandfather by his active opposition to that war. Without pause, this influence went on to a later period and gave me anti-militarist thought and understanding. This was a most interesting stage of mental evolution for I concerned myself, not only with war, but the conduct of war, the position of Buller, Roberts, and Kitchener. Next came the Boy Preacher period, when I took issue with the Church of England over the rights of Nonconformists. My grandfather favoured my schism. At that time, the views I held were in disfavour with the learned divines of the Established Church for they were completely opposed to any suggestion that the Nonconformists had any rights. Today, my point of view of 1902, is the accepted view of most Episcopalian ecclesiastics. Fifty years later! Then, I was dismissed contemptuously as an ignorant boy.

As a Boy Preacher, my activities did not find my grandfather much interested. From the moment when I declared myself a Theist, however, he became my guide, philosopher, and friend. He remained so till the end of his days.

To a great extent, the story of my early life is also the story of my grandfather. Anything that I may have achieved, and much of the activity I have engaged in, would have been impossible but for his help and loyalty, his great devotion. Apart from the desire to do him honour, factual truth requires that I should record the part he played in my evolution.

Always as I remember, my grandfather's pleasure was to rise in the morning and get breakfast for his family. This consisted of his wife; his youngest daughter, Charlotte; my mother, until her second marriage; myself; and lastly, himself. On Sunday, with all the family together, breakfast was a hearty meal.

During the week, in order to do the tasks, upon which he insisted, he would rise at six. From then till 8.30 when he went to work, he would do all kinds of jobs in the home, sometimes going out for a few household messages. Assured that he had done all that was helpful, and content that all was well, we would leave, he to work across the street and I to school.

I, too, rose at six in the morning. But there were no household tasks for me. From six till eight-thirty I would study. My grandfather would not hear of my doing any errands. If he heard my grandmother ask me to get something or go somewhere, he would

grandfather's Bradlaugh

say: "No! Let the boy study. I'll go." I would see him collecting my boots and set about cleaning them. When I protested, he would say: "Never mind, Dady. You must study. One day, I'll be under the sod. You'll be growing old. There will be other young children anxious to study. Help them if you want to remember me."

After my refusal to go to church any more, he took me aside and explained that church-going was not the most important thing. Then the matter was dismissed until I became a Boy Preacher. During this activity of mine, he introduced me to the sermons of Dr. A. W. Momerie, who was the morning preacher at the Foundling Hospital, from 1884 to 1896. Because of his broad views on religion, Dr. Momerie was dismissed or forced to resign. In Momerie's sermons I found much food for thought and I believe their effect on my mind was quite important.

All my adult life I have been intensely interested in the question of India. Here, again, the responsibility for the awakening of this interest was my grandfather's. He was an admirer of W. E. Gladstone and although my grandfather's radicalism went beyond that of Gladstone, he had a large portrait of him hanging on the front-room wall. To take an example: Gladstone believed in Home Rule for Ireland. My grandfather believed in an Irish Republic. His opposition to the Irish persecutions, the State Church, and the rule of Dublin Castle, was very strong.

When Charles Bradlaugh made his stand at Northampton, my grandfather was one of his supporters. Bradlaugh was elected first in 1880 but was not allowed to take his seat till 1886, the year when I was born.

The friendship my grandfather had for the Indian cause, resulted in his support of an Indian candidate in Central Finchley. He was one of the nominators of Dabhabai Naorji who was returned as the Member of Parliament in that election. Dabhabai Naorji, who lived to be a very old man, was M.P. for Central Finchley from 1892 to 1895. He was the first Indian to be elected to the British Parliament.

On any subject in which I am interested I can trace my grandfather's influence. He evinced strong opposition to any suggestion of racialism. In the many quarrels that occurred in Clerkenwell over the treatment of the immigrant Italians, he always took his stand by the Italians.

Here then was a record of heretical influence in the direction of free inquiry in the matter of religion, opposition to war, living interest in India, and internationalism of outlook.

In point of time, my grandfather's attitude towards the Boer War, and its moulding of my thought comes first.

My grandfather bitterly denounced the Boer War of 1899-1902. He opposed the Jingoes relentlessly and proudly accepted the title of



OOM PAUL KRUGER

October 10, 1825-July 14, 1904

Portrait taken December, 1900. Exhibited by the author at Pro-Boer Meetings in London, 1901.

Pro-Boer. I attended meeting after meeting with him, held in opposition to the war. I was then thirteen. Under his persuasion, I studied war thoroughly. In our discussions on war he was most anxious that I should make it a principle to oppose war always. He spoke of the battle-line of history and what it meant to humanity. In my own conduct I was inclined to pacifism before the Boer War was declared. Since then I have been a convinced Pacifist and Anti-Militarist.

On the way to and from these meetings my grandfather explained that, as a young man, he had discovered that he was opposed to the Crimea War. He regarded the Boer War as an act of invasion on the part of the British. It was an Uitlanders' conspiracy.

At these meetings held in London, I exhibited a portrait of President Kruger—"Oom Paul". This was in 1901. This portrait was photographed for wide distribution on December 7, 1900. Kruger went into exile and died at Clarens, Switzerland, on July 14, 1904.

The exhibition and circulation of Kruger's picture in London was regarded as "queer behaviour"!

7. WOMAN'S RIGHTS' AFTERMATH

I had one row with my stepfather shortly after his marriage to my mother. Although he knew that the marriage was bigamous, he took it very seriously as regards the alleged rights of the husband. Had he been married legally twenty times over, his Victorian ideas still would have been absurd. He knew nothing of Mr. Barrett of Wimpole Street and he was not much good as a bread-winner. But his attitude over certain things resembled strongly that of Mr. Barrett. After the marriage, despite the cares of domestic life, my mother continued her work.

In an attempt to play his part, my stepfather tried to give up drinking and sometimes would be completely sober on Saturday. He had no capacity for thinking but he endeavoured to be what he considered was a decent sort. On every day of the week with the exception of Saturday, he was sober and sociable. Saturday was the day of doubt. On his good Saturdays, home life was pleasant and friendly and I can recall some of the happy times I enjoyed with him in the company of my mother and grandparents. He and my grandfather would go walking. What they talked about I cannot imagine for I know of no interest they had in common. Yet they seemed to get along fairly well when together.

The row between him and myself arose over my mother receiving letters addressed to her alone. She could not have got many for her contacts outside the home were few and she did not write much in reply to any letter. One Saturday, he insisted on opening a letter addressed to my mother while I was there. He maintained that it was from some other man despite the fact that he should have recognised the handwriting as that of my mother's sister, Beatty. When I saw him calmly open my mother's letter I was furious. She, partly annoyed, was prepared to give way to this masculine impertinence. I was not. Young as I was, it seemed to me that this ridiculous invasion had to be challenged. So I challenged it. I told him that he had no right to interfere with any letter addressed to my mother, and if he persisted in opening her letters, I would make a point of collecting his letters as they arrived, and of opening them. I stated I would read them before I passed them over to him. If I did not like the contents of any such letter, I would destroy it, or else keep it to read to my mother. Then the fat was in the fire! He called me some pretty bad names. He threatened to throw me out of the house. This roused my mother in my defence. It was her home and my home also! He was infuriated by what she said and he started throwing whatever came to hand at me and, incidentally, at my mother. Next he vowed he would strike me. "You do that," I said, "and I'll raise such a scandal you'll be ashamed of yourself." I reminded him that he should remember that, despite all his claims to a husband's rights. which were no rights at all, he was not a husband for his marriage to my mother was *not* legal and that any husband's rights were not his. This somewhat stumped him. My mother, taking advantage of the pause, threw a towel at him which fell over his face. This seemed to act as a damper for after a few more words, he quietened down.

Later in the day, my grandparents called,

First my grandmother was taken aside by my stepfather but he came back from their talk looking discouraged for, as we learned afterwards, she gave him no sympathy. Then it was grandfather's turn to be told. Again there was no sympathy. My grandfather supported me and further said that my mother would be better off to leave him and come back with them. All this disapproval overwhelmed my stepfather. He apologised to my mother and promised never to open her letters again. He did keep his word. Thus ended an episode that never ought to have occurred. For the others, the matter was finished. For me it was an event that gave rise to much thought. It developed in me a strong belief of the necessity to fight for woman's rights.

The defeat my stepfather had suffered from all sides resulted in good. He did not hold it against me and indeed his manner to me was most friendly. He would insist upon my going with them when he and my mother went walking. His insistence in this direction led to a small folly, done with the intention of evoking my admiration. I appreciated his purpose but was not impressed by his act. I knew he wanted me to see that he was a real pal. He was, but his action to prove this was not one which moved me at all. He wrecked his life in consequence.

No one could have been more sober, more anxious to please than was my stepfather on this particular Saturday. At the junction of St. John's Terrace, opposite No. 10 where my mother and he lived, and St. John's Street Road, was a post at the edge of the pavement. These used to be a feature of some roadways in years past though they are few enough nowadays being only placed in streets where no vehicular traffic is allowed. My stepfather started to make humorous comments on the time when, hopping along Farringdon Road, I had fallen down the chute of a bottle-manufacturer's shop. The picture of my doing so must have struck some thought linking my clumsiness and lack of interest in games of any kind with his physical prowess. He pointed to the post and said that though I could not vault over it he could. No sooner said than done. Once, twice, thrice; with the greatest of ease he vaulted over. At his fourth attempt he got over but on landing his foot slipped on some stones. His foot went under him and his fall fractured his thigh.

In great pain, he was removed to hospital where he remained for almost four months. He lost his job. When he returned home, his efforts to find work in his trade proved fruitless and he was compelled to take work as an odd-job man. In his out of work periods he found that his former mates would always be willing to treat him to a drink but not to a cup of tea or a meal when he met them on his way around. So he began to drink again. My mother had no sympathy with him, particularly when he arrived home drunk. But I could understand and sympathise. Now his drinking got him into jail. He fell into debt. Finally, from fear of arrest, he ran away to Canada with a brother named Ben. Several months later my mother received a letter from Ben, enclosing a cutting from a local paper reporting the death of George Daniel Stray in an accident on the railroad near Calgary. That was all my mother ever heard. Thus she and I became the guardians, as it were, of the young family. My grandfather went to live with another daughter because, being widowed, she needed help. We agreed with him and, as this daughter's home was nearer to his work than my mother's, it did away with the long journeying to and fro. When he left, the home consisted of my mother, my three halfbrothers and myself.

Years later, one of them having died in the First World War, my two remaining halfbrothers emigrated to Canada. There they discovered that George Daniel Stray was not the man who had been killed on the railroad. My mother's second husband had not died. My halfbrothers learned that until a few weeks previously, he had been very much alive. He had married a farmer's widow in Canada, become himself a prosperous farmer and had created an entirely new family for himself.

Thus my mother's second "marriage" had not ended with death as she believed. It had ended as did her first—by the desertion of her partner.

I do not remember just when my mother moved to 133 Goswell Road. It must have been soon after the death of my grandmother for my grandfather came to live there also. Unlike the former home, it was a definite self-contained dwelling, whereas the other had been only a sub-let flat in a house. The house in Goswell Road backed on a shoe shop. One entrance was in Compton Buildings and the other through the shop—when the shop was open. There was a huge basement to this house and this basement became the scene of my first publishing activity. In fact, it was

the first Bakunin Press. It was also the meeting place of the Communist Group I established in London in 1906.

The house in Goswell Road was the scene of many adventures. It was the milestone in my transition from private to public life. From there, I set out to my first job and later started on what threatened to become a journalistic career. From there I made my acquaintance with Fleet Street. My Boy Preaching began from there. Theistic missionary, Atheist, Socialist—my development in these directions took place while I lived in Goswell Road. At this address I passed from Social Democracy to Anarchism, lecturing and writing freely with the aim of developing thought and agitation. I also worked at a job to help support the home.

8. THE BIBLE AND NICK CARTER

My first job was as office boy in an insurance doctor's office in Queen Victoria Street. This was a grand job for leisure for the doctor was seldom there. It was mostly used by the doctor's father-in-law for some sort of investment schemes. The doctor lived in Holland Park and through taking out all kinds of sporting equipment to his home I made the acquaintance of the district in which I afterwards lived for many years and where I conducted so much Socialist propaganda.

I enjoyed my first job. Compelled to sit and do nothing from 10 a.m. till 5.30 p.m., I read. What did I read? The Bible which I studied very thoroughly indeed, marking the fundamental difference between the Old and New Testaments. From this reading, I came to realise that the Old Testament was the literature of a race—its history, its songs, its hopes, fears and visions. The New Testament was the literature of a movement. Both were of unequal value. Because a movement produces a literature, it does not follow that all that writing is of the same value or texture. Some may be inspired by genius. Some may be just plodding, utterly devoid of inspiration, but sincere and still the writing or record of the movement. Similarly, the literature of a race may be of unequal worth. Actually, its racial undercurrent notwithstanding, some of the writing of the prophets of the Old Testament almost passes into the literature of a movement. It never completely loses its racial trend though its promises of justice and well-being belong to the New rather than to the Old Testament. All this I noted as I poured over the many Notes on the Scriptures during this wonderful leisure time in the doctor's office.

Not all my leisure was spent in this way. These Bible studies were preparing me for my boy-preaching and also for my later intellectual development. By these studies I reached, what many of my contemporaries did not reach, a complete understanding of the difference between sacred and profane literature. There was no mystery about the distinction. And there was no superstition about the matter. Sacred literature was the literature of a cause, an underworld of struggle, of poverty, of outcast unrecognised prophets, spokesmen of the common people. It was the study from the gutter and within the gutter challenging with the blast of its trumpet the halls of the edifices of oppression. Profane literature was the accepted, overworld literature of the time. The accepted writing, sometimes ugly, sometimes beautiful, that was received as normal and had no danger for the forces of sin that ruled the world.

Whilst I rejoiced in this study of sacred literature, I also developed a simple, hearty, common taste for a very special kind of profane literature. One day I bought a five-cent *Nick Carter* booklet for one penny. That was the first of quite a library of these five-cent *Nick Carters*. As funds permitted, I would buy these same stories in 15 cents form. My interest in the exploits of Nick Carter was intense and so thoroughly had I studied him that I could have written his biography. One of the stories introduced me to a caricature of Emma Goldman, entitled *Emma Silverman and the Anarchists*. That title has always stuck in my memory. *Nick Carter* kept me sane and certainly did me no harm. It did not make me believe in prison or crime. It never turned me from my Bible studies nor from my religious purpose. I merely saw in Nick Carter a champion of Right. I idealised the tales and adventures. I am quite sure that this reading made nothing but a good impression on me. We often get out of our

reading what we put into it. Later, as a Boy Preacher, I would turn up at a meeting with the Bible in one pocket and Nick Carter in the other. It was good fun, kept my mind healthy and clear and saved me from much hypocrisy. To this day, I enjoy "low-brow" reading. It is no longer *Nick Carter*. But it is just as adventurous, and just as simple.

Sometime in April 1955, I came across a poem entitled *Nick Carter* by Newman Levy. I do not suppose that Mr. Levy and I have much in common. At one time he was Assistant District Attorney for New York. He has been Counsel for the Prosecution and Counsel for the Defence in a number of murder cases. This is the legal life and I know the apology made for leading it. I doubt if it has an ethical explanation. Like all professionalism its explanation is mostly economic. Mr. Levy has written for the stage and is a man of literary talent. He entertains but does not help to change society. To me he is a man without true vision or true purpose. However, he has put his appreciation of Nick Carter into verse. By so doing, he reminds me of one of my youthful pleasures and one of my methods of education, from away back in 1901-2. I cannot refrain from reproducing part of the poem.

The years have flown rapidly by me
Since I was a youngster of ten,
But the sound of a name still awakens
The thrill of my boyhood again.

There was never a man like Nick Carter,
The idol and pride of my youth,
The terror of killers and robbers,
The peerless, unbeatable sleuth.

* * * *

For Nick was as brave as a lion,
He'd the brawn and the muscle of ten,
And his eyes, flashing hypnotic power,
Could subdue the most desperate men.

Concealed in the folds of his garments
Were pistols of formidable size.
Also costumes, beards, wigs, and moustaches
If he needed a sudden disguise.

At times he'd appear as a sailor,
A scrubwoman, parson, or hick,
And so great was his skill as an actor
That you'd never suspect it was Nick.

He would enter the lair of his foemen
Without the least vestige of fear.
In his eyes was a cold, steely glitter;
On his face a contemptuous sneer.

But some rat would be sure to betray him
And they'd seize him and bind him with ropes,
Then they'd toss his limp form in the river,
And they'd think he was finished—the dopes!

Or perhaps they'd set fire to the building
Where he lay to a powder keg bound,
Or they'd dig a deep pit and they'd plant him
About fifty feet under the ground.

You might think that these stunts would disturb him,
But such trifles could never faze Nick,
For he knew he would quickly be rescued
By his faithful aides, Patsy and Chick.

For behold, there as chief of the bandits,
Was Chick, in each hand a big gat,
And behind him, his loyal lieutenant
Stood grinning, Hibernian Pat.

Then swiftly they'd round up the scoundrels
And hustle them off to the pen,
And the world would exclaim in amazement,
"Nick Carter has done it again!"

No, there never was one like Nick Carter,
The idol and pride of my youth,
The terror of killers and robbers,
The peerless, unbeatable sleuth.

This good time came to an end. After only a few months the doctor decided to go abroad to Uganda, as a medical missionary. I received from him four weeks' wages and a gift and that was the end of my first job. My next situation was as office-sweeper in the National Press Agency.

From my gusto at the exploits of Nick Carter, "the unbeatable sleuth", my one great relief from piety and the purpose of my vision, my background of leisure as it were, I come to the events of the important year, 1902. This was the year of real development, the year when, step by step, I grew, not only physically, but mentally.

9. MY DEBT TO THE RAJAH

In January 1902, His Highness, Sir Madlio Singh, the Maharajah of Jeypore, visited London. I remember well this visit which was given much publicity at the time. The Rajah had the courage to cling to the superstition in which he was reared. He brought with him, as his most treasured possession, "a travelling god". This was the subject of much trivial distortion in the press.

At this time, I rejoiced in being a villager of the great Metropolis of London. I did not feel that I was only a villager but the Rajah's visit startled me into a recognition of that fact. It cured me of my London provincialism. It made me realise that the world was not entirely Christian. It prepared me to gain more from the Wednesday lectures delivered by the Rev. Mr. Buss than would otherwise have been the case.

Up to the time of the Maharajah's visit, my vision had been crabbed. The world to me was London; and, as I realised to my surprise, not all London. The other countries of the world did not exist for me. The dominions of the British Empire meant nothing to me. Scotland was a kind of no-man's land, a hidden and impossible Tibet beyond some mighty wall, leagues upon leagues distant from the place in which I lived. I realised that there was a country called England because I lived in the chief city of that country. I knew, of course, that there were other cities in England. I knew their names but they were not nearly so important as the names of the shops in the small part of London in which I had been born and reared. England was but a suburb of London just as London itself was but a suburb of Clerkenwell. I had not thought of a vital time before the present; of any city but London; of any London beyond the city, Clerkenwell and Islington. I did pay a faint tribute to the reality of Highgate but as a place I sometimes visited on a horse tram. This seemed the back of beyond to me and merely gave character and reality to the part of the city in which I lived. I was thoroughly ignorant and rejoiced in my ignorance. I was indeed the perfect London villager. Were I a Christian now as I was then, I would say that it was predestined in the stardust that His Highness of Jeypore should travel from India to London in order that I might be cured of my Clerkenwell complacency.

Of course. in some strange kind of way, I knew that there had been a past for I had seen many evidences of it in Clerkenwell. I accepted that there must be a world peopled even as Clerkenwell was peopled. It was all gloriously vague. History, geography, everything beyond the immediate locality of my experience was an indefinable alienism. My mind refused to form any impression of a true wide-view of the past, just as it declined to form any impression of the distant in point of space. For all practical purposes, the world outwith London and the world before now was a ghost-land. I understood that there was a world that was not Christian. But it was not the world in which I lived. It was not the world of my experience. I could not conceive of it having any connection, any practical transport association with that real world of my understanding, the world called Christian. It was a wonderful world of magic and myth; and it seemed to me that in order to enter into relations with it, I would have to possess Aladdin's lamp. The once so real and living past was not a world that had functioned in time, and had been lived from meal to meal, but a caveland of Christmas make-believe. I was a typical Londoner and in some respects a typical Christian. What wonderful universal understanding and cosmic comprehension belongs to the orthodox mind!

This narrowness of vision was ended by the Rajah's visit. One fine January morning I awoke and having an inordinate interest in the daily press I purchased a newspaper which informed me in glaring headlines of the visit of "the Maharajah and his God". This intrigued me and I purchased other papers, until at last I was familiar with several headings, such as "The God in the Car", "The Rajah with the Image" and "The Rajah with the God". Under these captions, the London press made its readers understand that the Rajah had brought with him to Britain the image of his family god, Sri Krishna. The visit of this pocket god caused no little sensation in certain religious circles. A silly season discussion resulted and the Rajah and his god was, to me, not just something printed in the papers but a record impressed for all time on my memory. I felt gratitude, not horror. I was grateful to the Rajah for his uncompromising allegiance to the orthodoxy of his forefathers. His orthodoxy made me a heretic.

The Rajah's god was a substantial fact. It had invaded my petty little world. It had brought home to me the reality of other cities

and other religions. It had made known to me, as no mere study could have done, the fact that Christianity was *not* the religion of the world. It had forced me to realise that despite my unawareness there was an Oriental theology beyond the pale of Christian orthodoxy. I learned of the researches that had been made by scholars like Max Muller and Goldstucker. I noted their names for future study. I learned of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita. All had been translated and must be studied. I learned of Sir Edwin Arnold who translated the last work under the title of *Song Celestial.* The hero of this great epic was Sri Krishna, the god of the Maharajah of Jeypore.

Previously, I had believed that Jesus called Christ was the only incarnation of god. Now I learned with wonder that Sri Krishna was the most perfect incarnation of the supreme deity. He was the guide, philosopher and friend of the warrior Arjuna in the greatest of battlefields within the historical or living memory of man. In heroism, wisdom, love, and justice, Krishna was beyond all others. Such was the Hindu conception. Krishna possessed miraculous power, both passive and active, and was god in man. To the Christians he was a myth. But to the Rajah, their poor Christ was a myth. Here was a pretty conflict. It stirred my parochial London mind to its very depths or shall we say shallows. I found it difficult to subscribe to the rigid theory of Christian incarnation. I could not contend well for the absolute reality of the deity of Christ when I was mocked by the shadow of Krishna Incarnate. The world had grown real and the laws beyond my realm of experience had become fact. A bad beginning for a Christian Boy Preacher. I had ceased from being a London villager. I was a citizen in embryo of the world.

I was grateful to the Rajah for a further lesson. His Highness was not satisfied to carry round with him one god. He had also brought with him to London the image of his household deity, Sri Gopalji. He worshipped this deity every day before he discharged any temporal duty or had broken his fast. To the "lotus feet" of this image, he offered every morning and evening fragrant flowers and the leaves of the Tulsi plant, smeared with sandalwood paste. He recited certain formulae and made certain gestures, as enjoined in the Hindu scriptures.

I viewed this symbolism of image worship as ridiculous. Ridiculous, not because the god was alien, but because such worship was ridiculous. The strange god by a process of parallelism drove home a fundamental truth. How could I develop my sense of iconoclasm at the Rajah's conduct, unless I drew an analogy and objected to the image worship of the Catholic Church, to the images of the Babe, Mary, and Christ in his maturity? I pondered over this question of image worship. I wondered how much idolatry was implied by the minister in the Anglican Church turning towards the east. I wondered how much image worship was involved in the Holy Communion. I wondered if it was any worse to worship the image of Krishna, with incantations and flowers and Ganges water, than to baptise with Jordan water and to kneel before the Cross.

Without doubt I was indebted to the Rajah. I was to live for a long time in the realm of metaphysics. It was to be a slow reluctant journey, my descent to the mother earth of economic, social and individual reality. I was concerned with theology, miscalled religion, where I should have worried over economics. I had no sense of sociology. I was a typical priest in the making but the Rajah set my feet on the path of understanding. He helped me to make the first descent from heaven to earth, from the unreal to the real, from the world of cloudland to that of matter, of social life and struggle. I had lost Christ, although I was, as yet, unconscious of the fact, without finding Lord Krishna. Subconsciously, I had liquidated the incarnation in understanding. I was under a debt of eternal obligation to the Rajah because he declined to visit London without bringing with him, from the backwoods of the Hindu religion, an image of his god. An Indian Rajah, an ancient image and the latest in motor cars; and I ceased from being the London villager and was en route to losing completely my Christianity.

10. THE BOY PREACHER EVOLVES

Following upon the incident of the Rajah and his gods, was the wisdom that came from attending the lectures on *The Religions of The World* by Mr. Buss. These lectures were delivered between April 9 and July 25, 1902. They took me to Egypt, to China, India and Siam. I was introduced to Confucius, Brahma, and Buddha. These lectures caused me to

think on Atheism and forced me to reflect on the failure of Christian missionary work among the Hindus. My notes* reveal the narrowness and bigotry of my mind but they also promised a broadening of vision. Here and there were flashes of heresy.

In June 1902, I wrote, duplicated and circulated my essay on *The Last Days*. The essay opened clumsily.

*Throughout this great "Christian Land"—nay, throughout all the lands where white men rule, and over which the "Christian Flag" flies, there are to be found goodly men who cannot understand why men allow themselves to be dragged, step by step, down the "'road to ruin" without making an effort to save themselves; who, on the contrary, refuse to be rescued. Yet these goodly and earnest men, who would be shocked to think that they did not practise what they preached, are doing the selfsame, only on a much larger scale themselves. To show my readers to what I refer, I would have them consider the 21st chapter of St. Luke, verses 9-30; the 15th chapter of St. Mark, verses 7-31; and the 24th chapter of St. Matthew, verses 6-30, all of which deal with the second coming of our Lord. What I want to call attention to is the statement of Christ concerning the Last Days.**

Thus I drifted into real contact and conflict with the world. I held unannounced and not very successful meetings in various parts of Holloway. This took me away from Clerkenwell for I was somewhat shy about making my first efforts at speaking in my home area. Holloway was sufficiently far from Clerkenwell to overcome this shyness and yet not too far away to have easy access to my home. There I continued to speak and things moved fairly easily until October 1902. I read the advertisement of an evangelist by name John Willoughby Masters asking for the let of rooms for Mission Services. I was disappointed at the social inactivity of the Anglican Church and felt keenly the ineffectiveness of my own isolated evangel. The advertisement spurred me. I wrote to Mr. Masters offering assistance and suggesting an alliance. He responded and we opened a Christian Social Mission at the Assembly Rooms, 5 Russell Road, Holloway. The meetings were advertised as being conducted by *"The Lyrical Gospel Herald, assisted by Master Guy Aldred, the Boy Preacher."*

Willoughby Masters was the Lyrical Herald. He was a powerfully-built man of about sixty possessed of a beautiful singing voice. His preaching was far too orthodox for my liking, although he did express the need for genuine social service. His gospel was not altogether other-worldism. Yet he had no spirit of real challenge which to me was the essence of the Christian message. He had no idea of falling foul of established government or of being too radical politically. However, this mission brought me in contact with several nonconformist ministers. I found that these ministers of nonconformity were rabidly and stupidly orthodox, lacking the scholarship I had encountered in the writings of several of the Church of England clergy. My reading at this time consisted of discussions on religion by Anglican authors. This was not due to any spirit of sectarianism for I was prepared to study whatever book came to hand so long as it promised to throw light on the subject.

The narrowness of the preachers with whom I was associating led at times to somewhat unseemly incidents.

As far as the winter weather permitted, the Christian Social Mission organised open-air meetings, usually at different corners along the Holloway Road. At one of these gatherings, a local dissenting minister was invited to speak. He must have been attending a Christian Evidence Meeting, for he responded to our invitation by delivering a rancorous attack on Atheists in general and Charles Bradlaugh and Robert G. Ingersoll in particular. I was a keen admirer of Thomas Hood at this time and delighted in his punning. Bad taste but excellent fun. This ministerial attack on Bradlaugh and Ingersoll made me recall Hood's fighting challenge: *"If their offence is rank, should your's be rancour?"* Hood may have framed the sentence a little differently, but this was the sense of it and the keynote of his poem.

I followed this unworthy divine on the rostrum. I was indignant and bitter. The man's manner was devoid of charity and he was wanting in grace. I felt no mercy. He had dishonoured our Mission and outraged Christian ethics. And he was so damnably complacent, so smugly self-righteous, so certain of his own salvation. I felt that if Christ had died to save him, he must have died in error. The man's hypocrisy stood in the way of his salvation. I could not imagine so much unctuousness being welcomed in heaven. Even hell might have disdained to receive gladly such thin-lipped villainy. There was

*See Appendix 1 for author's notes on these lectures.

*See Appendix 2 for full text of essay.

nothing robust or virile about the man's slander. He was a mincing libeller. And so obvious.

I attacked him without a moment's hesitation much to the joy of His Majesty's not too believing liege subjects who formed the meeting. I pointed out that I had read nothing of either Bradlaugh or Ingersoll. Supposing these men were immoral in their lives, as he suggested, it did not follow that their immorality proceeded from their belief or unbelief. He had not established any connection. Further, the speaker had not instanced the immorality. He had charged the offence in general terms without supplying the details. I had no interest in the details but I did want to be sure that the charge was founded on fact. The speaker had deduced immorality from the ideas that Bradlaugh and Ingersoll expounded, not by a process of reasoning, but from sheer force of prejudice. In my view, one could hold views that might imply licence, without being licentious. He had not sought to understand the ideas. To my mind, he had offended doubly. He had charged without proof and without any regard to fact; and he had asserted without conforming to the laws of logical deduction and induction.

I supported my protest by stating that I had vivid recollections of reading accounts of the concrete expressions of immorality on the part of Christian Ministers. The cloth had not been above practising seduction, adultery, and even proceeding from passion to murder. The crimes of divines were notorious. If, therefore, the alleged but unproved immorality of a Bradlaugh made Atheism immoral, the viciousness of a parson made Christianity vicious. On the other hand, if it was contended that the vice of a Christian did not proceed from his Christianity, so, it seemed to me, that the immorality of an Atheist did not, of necessity, proceed from his Atheism. Speaking as a Christian, I expressed surprise at Christian governments punishing Christian parsons for immorality, and not punishing Ingersoll and Bradlaugh if they had been guilty of the crimes attributed to them. It was impossible for me to speak with authority on all that Bradlaugh and Ingersoll represented; but I expressed my belief in my reverend colleague's tendency to lie unto the glory of God.

This attack proved too much for my reverend friend's mentality. He literally foamed at the mouth and spoke under the influence of a maleficient temper. He stutteringly averred that I was a "child of Satan". This concept seemed to have pleased his imagination and he played with the conceit for quite a while.

The performance did not impress me overmuch because I had read very strange commentaries on the Bible and already was toying with the idea, entertained by the early Christians, that there were two God concepts: the God of mere creation, an evil deity; and the Good God—of Re-creation! Later, as my acquaintance with Biblical lore extended, this assertion pleased me. In the Old Testament, the Devil is aways telling the truth, whereas Jehovah's perspicuity takes the opposite direction.

I withdrew from this particular meeting in disgust and left my colleagues to their denunciations of Atheism. When I reached home I discussed the entire matter with my grandfather. His attitude was typical of the man. He locked his room and gave me a pamphlet by Ingersoll and a small essay by Charles Bradlaugh and told me to "thank God for Charles Bradlaugh".

What a turmoil there was the next day in the mission hall! Willoughby Masters; the young lady who played the harmonium—a fundamentalist with a rather coy approach to me—and the "culprit", the rebellious boy preacher, all engaged in criticism and rebuke. I emphasised the truth of what I had said and insisted on the importance and logic of the circular of the Mission we had issued which averred our full sympathy with the best in all sects and no sects. We wished to work out of the old rut, and to draw together companionable souls by the common bonds of spiritual brotherhood and mutual consideration.

There was a truce at the end and I continued to work with this Mission. Time was devoted to visiting the tenements and slums of North London. Despite the desire to maintain an outward respectability, there was much unhappiness and want within most of the homes. The poor took their poverty for granted but endeavoured to ease their lot by whining and small trickeries. I have a feeling of sorrow rather than of anger at the people who live on their wits, especially in a small way. I had that same feeling then. I knew poverty and lived in poverty, although it did not outlaw me entirely. And I had the understanding to realise that when the poor man or woman lived by trickery, it was a constant drag. There was no conclusion, only a continuous soul-destroying hopeless struggle. They whined and cringed when they should have stood erect and have challenged their

economic superiors, as they considered them. It was a case of empty bag and full bag. I had sympathy because I realised that the well-groomed suits of clothes with money in the bank had cringed their way to place and power. How do men become judges? By learning or by cringing? How do theologians become bishops and primates? By learning or by cringing? The answer is clear. The cringing actually continues. But it is cringing with a prosperous background and it assumes the style of manners, etiquette, order of rank, and all that. It is sheer paganism. I despise and hate paganism when it masquerades as Christian society.

I did not confine my Boy Preacher activity to Holloway. I went into the East Central district and worked with a mission that prided itself on the number of blankets it gave to the poor. With what sadness I noted the attitude of the poor! How they pandered and fawned in order to get one of those blankets! What poor souls they were!

This concept of charity was not confined to the outside work. I smile as I remember the packed Sunday school on those Sundays when we distributed oranges and sweets! This was an inducement to regular attendance. But it never worked out. They came in crowds on Orange and Sweet Sunday. Next Sunday the benches would be sparsely filled. How they knew when to come and when not to come I never discovered.

Charity—meaning the condescending bestowal of surplus shoddy and the obsequious acceptance of same—and wordly success, hearts set on treasure in this world, were the keynotes of the Christian work in which I found myself involved. There was no joy in such work. It outraged my faith and destroyed my zeal. One illustration will suffice.

As a Boy Preacher I spoke at the Mission Hall in King's Cross Road, not far from the police station. One Sunday, I was the second of two speakers. There was a short prayer, two hymns, and a short Bible reading. There was a chairman, thus making the assembly a cross between a meeting and a service. My fellow speaker was a carter by trade, a sturdy man, proud of his home and informative regarding his devotion to it. He worked long hours for a small wage but spent all his spare time in ministry work. He was the true zealot. As part of his belief in Christianity, he stood boldly for total abstinence. He was most decidedly the enemy of the public house and much opposed to the Church of England for its investments in the drink traffic.

He spoke powerfully against intoxicating liquors and he illustrated his arguments by personal experience in a way that amazed me. I was with him in his denunciation of the brewer, the distiller, and the publican. His illustration I found impossible. He explained how poor were the carter's wages and added that he had bought his own house, that it was well-furnished throughout. He was able to let rooms to persons who earned far bigger wages than he did. How was this done? By being a total abstainer whereas most of the lodgers spent their money in booze and consequently never saved and never secured home comforts!

This was too much for me. When I got up to speak I said that the reasoning was false although the cause was good. If, in a crowd, people were of unequal height and one man stood on a pedestal he might be able to see over the heads of his fellows. If, however, *all* stood on stools of the same depth, matters were exactly as they were before. If all boozers became total abstainers, it would not mean that they would be able to let out rooms in their own houses; it might mean only that they bought smaller houses in which to live themselves. It would lessen the number of lodgers and therefore lessen the power to let rooms.

This purely logical argument annoyed my carter friend and the mission organisers. I was not invited to speak again. I am quite sure that my Christian brethren marked me down from that day as an infidel.

On all sides, it was a sadly inefficient world and my kingdom was not of it. My concern was not with heaven after death. My purpose was heaven on earth. The Church was not showing the way. But that there was a way I believed. Slowly I was evolving into a Socialist. My theology was tinged with heresy. As a Boy Preacher I was a failure. I lacked the acceptance of mob psychology. I believed too strongly in the individual soul of man. I was too much of a Christian to be satisfied with a pulpit that was subservient to Mammon. I believed in Jesus and him crucified. I felt that so long as the common people had to cringe in order to live, Jesus was being crucified in their persons. The Son of Man had to be delivered from these false social chains that bound them. My mind was not clear intellectually, but my vision, my emotional vision, was clearing. I was seeing but still through a glass darkly.

APPENDICES

1. THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

As stated in Chapter 10, I attended a series of Wednesday noon-day lectures on "The Religions of the World", deivered by Mr. Buss at St. Anne's & St. Agnes' Church. I made notes on the main points in each address, and wrote a descriptive report around them. Mr. Buss read and corrected each effort.

I copy the following paragraph, exactly as it appears in the manuscript book containing the reports of these lectures:

"My First Notes, being the purport of the 'Wednesday Lectures' given by the Rev. S. Buss, LL.B., at St. Anne and St. Agnes, between and inclusive of April 9 to July 25, 1902, concerning 'The Religions of the World'."

At the head of each report I placed the date when the report was written down, as follows:

No 1 ANCIENT EGYPT 13-4-1902

" 'The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians' was the subject of the lecture given by the Rev. S. Buss, at the aforesaid church, on the 9th inst. It was the first of a new course, and proved very interesting. The purport of it is given below."

No. 2 CHINA (CONFUCIUS) 16-4-1902

"As one listened to the Rev. S. Buss's discourse on Confucius. he was reminded of the words of the 146th Psalm: Put not thy trust in Princes. One recalled the denunciation of ambition by Wolsey in his famous address to Cromwell, of which. perhaps Shakespeare was more the author than the famous Cardinal. Trusting to Princes was the greatest folly and misfortune of the life of Confucius. He narrowed his genius to serve princes where he should have enlarged himself in the real service of mankind. He became the law-giver of the great, who scoff in high places—and declare there is no God. no right, no righting of wrong, nothing but power and purchase, where he should have become the prophet of the poor; the mouthpiece of the oppressed, of those who anguish and languish in misery and want; the burdened many."

No. 3 BRAHMA 23-4-1902

"As I listened to the Rev. S. Buss's lecture on 'Brahma', I thought of Atheism and the failure of Christian Missionary Endeavour to come to grips with what is called or termed 'Infidelity'."

No. 4 SIAM: BUDDHA FROM INDIA 30-4-1902

"The Rev. S. Buss's discourse on Buddha was more like a beautiful recital than a dinner-hour lecture. He quoted largely from Sir Edwin Arnold's 'Light of Asia'."

"Born a prince. sheltered from disagreeable knowledge by his father, in turn, the young prince discovered that perpetual youth was not the lot of man; that age came, that pain existed, and that at last, there was death. Today, keen of eye and straight of limb; tomorrow—an object of pity. And then—silence!"

These four lectures may be taken as typical of the series. The fifth lecture dealt with the religion of "the Jews". It merely opposed the idea of Baal to the idea of God. This theme was developed better in the next lecture, treating of the religion of Syria. The seventh lecture introduced the audience to the business-like religion of the Ancient Roman; the eighth was on Druidism, and was picturesque, but traditional, and not living; and the ninth told us of Mohammedanism, and its great division into two irreconcilable sects. Their division into those who believe in oral traditions, and those who subscribe only to the Koran, forced attention to the great similar division in Christendom.

The introductions quoted tell part of the story. "Confucius" makes clear the fact that, as early as 1902, I believed in the emancipation of the poor and insisted on a Theism of social righteousness. "Brahma" plunged me into an immediate and fatal consideration of Atheism. It implied the distinct need to study Freethought. The introduction to "Buddha" shows a distinct interest in the theory of the mortality of the soul, and its influence on human character and conduct. I was treading on dangerous ground, but my ideal was the service of the common people.

Passages in these reports were priggish and not too promising.

In the "Confucius" report, I wrote:

"Although a great exponent of Atheism—the very name of which sends a cold shiver through one's blood—he was good at heart. It may be said of him: He left the world a little better than he found it. That it was very little was not due to his Atheism, but to his error in serving princes."

Atheism made me shiver! This was bad! It menaced the progress of my thought. But the Atheist left the world better than he found it. Any failure was due to class association, not to his philosohy. This was good and promising.

This report contained the following passages:

"Confucius was priest rather than prophet. If he had new wine he felt it might be conveyed in old bottles. Thus we find him, while still a young man, drawing up laws and reconstituting old Chinese customs. In the blossom of Spring, he became a jail governor, because he thought it would give him power for good. Alas, men still think like that, even Christian men: as though the bad were predestined to afford the good an opportunity for place, expansion and success."

The concluding passage is not so good. It lingers with unction over the alleged miserable passing into the tomb's silence of the Chinese sage:

"Failure followed failure, and the years went by. At last, acting on the advice of an ever faithful disciple, Confucius returned home to die, to become no more, to cease entirely, according to his hopeless gospel of Atheism. And so he died without joy or hope, a miserable man, broken-down by misfortune, enfeebled by age, his last cry being, instead of one of praise, one of worldly hopelessness: 'So little done, so much to do'!"

Only a Pharisee could have described the death of Confucius in these terms. This is the comment of one menaced with intellectual death.

As promised in the introduction quoted, the "Brahma" report considered very fully the question of Atheism and conversion of the Atheist to Theism. It contained many sentences that I feel should be quoted today. I make no apology for reproducing these excerpts from this first effort at descriptive reporting:

"No one ever has been won over to the following of the one and Only True God by the believer who states, in the face of reasoning, and without any pretence to understanding or sympathy, that he believes because he knows, because he has had the experience of God. Special experience, private revelation, is neither experience nor revelation. It is worthless evidence."

"God's thought of himself must be written in the heavens or the earth, in the heart and the mind of mankind. It must not be whispered like some old wife's tale and noised abroad like a plague, a scandal from hell. God's thought of himself must be full, open and free—a real message to all mankind."

"Many seek and so few find. Vision without charity is faith without redemption. That is, no revelation, no knowledge, no grace, no godliness.

"Men are Atheists only because Theism has failed to satisfy them and Theists do not understand them, do not understand their fellow creatures, their fellow children of God. That is an indictment of the Theists."

"The unbeliever is the believer, revolted by cant, seeking the spirit of service, rather than the letter of prayer. He is concerned with the fruit of faith, the works of the spirit, not the mysticism of indulgent self-reverie. He may be wrong: he is wrong: but what a wonderful garden of God he demands—a wonderful garden of loving and understanding and service. Has not even this despised Atheist a revelation also? Methinks the Sun of Faith is no respecter of windows. Its rays are not limited to creeds nor its light to special churches. It floods the world with light and illumines through every soul. Naturally, if God is, even Atheism must be a message of Theism. How could it be otherwise?"

"Atheists are our brothers and not our enemies. The Atheists' and unbelievers' arguments must be treated of and disproved, clause by clause, until they recognise the fallacy attending their respective unbeliefs. Evidently the Rev. S. Buss realises the truth, for each lecture, each subject, brings us to a point nearer God, to a clearer demonstration of the radiance of the divine existence."

It is wrong to take pride in one's achievements: but I confess to my humanness. I was not quite fifteen-and-a-half years of age when I penned these comments. I have them before me now in my boyish handwriting; and I feel a glow of pride as I read now what I wrote then.

This is how the report on Brahma concludes:

"The Hindoos, says Mr. Buss, have no personality, no history; dates there are none. For does the Universal date itself? Does divine Harmony need a register? Satan may need a log book but God is not an attorney. He is the Father of all—the ever sustaining Harmony. . . . One day men will know history for the nightmare of time, the story of fraud and crime, of Satan's challenge to God, the record of man's ignorance! History—how the love of kings conquered the love of truth!

"No personality; no history; no dates. Mr. Buss says this is Hindooism. What a wonderful idea! Just Being! Being as Being, Being without apology, Life! Just Being. What a forecast of what shall be."

The Brahma report shows that I was leaving nothing to miracle. Reason was the supreme guide. It was realised that non-belief involved counter-beliefs. Very few Christians seem to grasp this fact. So I must have been very near heresy, though I did not suspect it at the time. Despite the outward orthodoxy of my creed, inwardy there was the faintest spark of revolt, and I was single-eyed. Whatever was thought should be proclaimed.

Buddha, in these reports, wins my sorrowful regard:

"And so the prince turned from kingship as from vanity. He cast aside his rank and became a wandering missionary. He endeavoured to reform the Church of Brahma and merely negated it for the Church of Buddha. Founded against the terrible rites and ceremonies of Brahmanism; Buddhism has come to be one of the most idolatrous beliefs in the world.

"As with Confucius, so with Buddha, we are compelled to note the darkness cast over his would-be-good life by the dismal thought of the eternal sleep."

A little patronising and self-righteous, so far as the form of expression is concerned. But the idea was not to pat Buddha on the cheek. I had sensed, for the moment, the

awful pessimism of life; had seen its horrible uselessness, and shrunk from its realism. Buddha's saintly heroism came as a surprise even when related by Christian lips. So I seemed to patronise where actually I approached with deep affection and respect. As yet it was impossible for me to stand alone. God and Immortality were essential props to my existence. But I dismissed with loathing "the undisguised polytheism of the Babylonians", and rejoiced exceedingly in "the purity of the monotheism of the Jews".

The first report on Ancient Egypt was not so good as the reports on Confucius, Brahma, and Buddha. Thus there occurred a pitying reference to the Ancient Egyptian lower class worship of the elements of nature and of sacred animals! "Symbolical of their uninitiated state of being"! "Cannibalism"!

"Excellent," said Mr. Buss. He forgot to mention that Christianity centred about a cannibalistic propitiation for sin! That its theology was a perpetuation of Egyptian and other Pagan theology! That its rites and ceremonies had been handed down from a cannibal past!

2. THE LAST DAYS

After the opening paragraph reproduced on page 43, I quote the familiar saying: *"Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."* Upon which I comment:

"I want you to consider, dear brethren; Is this saying of the Master a prophecy or a warning? Many, nay most people regard it as the former. I, for my part, consider it to be the latter."

The essay proceeds to discuss the Boer War, and comments on the policy and activity of Kruger, Botha, De La Rey, and De Wet. I then translate the saying of Jesus as follows:

"Unless you give up worldliness, and seek justice and love, wars must be; and the Kingdom of Righteousness will come through violence and chaos. It need not so come. Seek righteousness, and the Kingdom will come through peace. The Herald of the Kingdom need not be seated upon a charger. But if nations and men seek power and riches, and live by policy, then the world is doomed to destruction. The last days will be a devastation. Such is the meaning conveyed by this prophecy and by the whole body of teaching of our Master Christ. 'God has ordained it, wars are inevitable,' is not the teaching of Christ. It is the defence of the politician who would plunge his country into war for the seeming benefit of a few who profit from havoc, suffering and destruction."

The third number of *No Traitor's Gait* begins Part III (ready February 5). This describes the author's transition from Boy Preacher to Atheist and Socialist Agitator. The reader will be introduced to the Rev. Charles Voysey, B.A., to H. M. Hyndman, and others, many of whom afterwards reached the House of Lords. It will end with his approach to the Anarchist Movement.

TO SUBSCRIBERS

Readers who want to be sure of securing this autobiography complete should subscribe now. Copies of the first number can be obtained still and all subscriptions include the first number. The printing is regulated to secure this result. It aids the publishers, greatly, both financially and also in the matter of publishing requirements if readers will subscribe now. This is not a paper but a book serialised for convenience of circulation.

FRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE STRICKLAND PRESS, GEORGE STREET, GLASGOW

CONTENTS

PART III. DOGMAS DISCARDED

1. Schism and Heresy
page 49

2. The Battle of Thought
page 51

3. Anti-Christian Theism
page 52

4. I Leave the Church
page 53

5. Theism
page 54

Charles Voysey
page 56

7. The Priest Without a Parish
page 64

APPENDIX

Boy Preacher Sermons
page 68

ILLUSTRATIONS

Charles Annesley Voysey
page 56

Theistic Lecture Leaflets
page 62

PART III. DOGMAS DISCARDED

1. SCHISM AND HERESY

I think—therefore I am.—Descartes

The First World War tended to unite the Christian churches under the national banner of each country. The Motherland became more important than the Fatherhood of God. It was a very false motherland—one of inequality and want. When one considers that bullets pay no regard to the type of dress worn by the dying, and that in the grave all are equal, differences in rank and particularly in the texture of the uniform are sorry masquerades when menaced by the shadow of death. For those who survived the First World War, or for the dependants of those who went under, there were variations of pensions based not on need but on status. Still God and the Church came into the picture in a secondary way. *"For God, King, and Country"* was a slogan that few cared to challenge. The phrase was a very free definition of the forces behind the struggle. It was a war for trade, wholesale murder for economic reasons, untold wickedness in the very sight of heaven, that reduced God to the position of a camp follower. It was a blasphemy that united the Church into one common purpose, the service of hell. So doing it made an end of words that previous to 1914 had some meaning. The word "schism" fell into disuse; and even "heresy" was obsolescent. It is hard for the folk of today to understand the language current in religious circles in 1902. At that time "schism" and "heresy" were real words, of most certain meaning, and involving painful consequences.

Schism is a very simple word to understand. It means a break-away from some established institution, not on some principle of belief, but because of a different concept of organsiation. A congregation hold a certain idea of God but they differ as to how that idea should be expressed in worship, or how the Church should organise to promote and extend the worship. One person leaves the body and either remains aloof or forms a new grouping or congregation. This is "schism".

The term is mainly, through usage, an ecclesiastical term, but it could be applied to any split in any secular organisation. The tendency has been to think of "schism" in relation to religion or theology alone. It is rarely used in a secular sense.

"Heresy" is another matter. It is deemed usually to be more serious than "schism". Interest in heresy has declined also. Once, the remedy for this imaginary crime was the cheerful Christian practice of burning. Later, it declined to imprisonment. Later still, it became a term of abuse. Today, it has not even that usage. Few persons take it seriously. Bigotry has died slowly but it has died. Let us say it has languished. And so heresy — implying departure from true doctrine — has passed away. The term is meaningless. Unfortunately, this does not prove that humanity is thinking clearly. It shows that mankind has grown too lazy to think. We have passed from the brutality of persecution to the dullness of a worthless tolerance. There is little growth in understanding.

Mankind, individually and collectively, has found thought difficult throughout the ages. In the days when heresy and schism were regarded with horror, heresy was, as I have said, regarded as a greater disloyalty or offence than schism. Actually, schism could be an offence and could arise from sordid motives. Heresy might be the result of misinformation, but it could never be, in the opinion of any thoughtful person, an offence. A man has the right to be a heretic. A man may have a right to be schismatic, but his motive must be impersonal and above challenge.

Ideas of heresy and schism vanished in a night because of the need for flag-waving unity in war. The 1914 War brought this about. Out of that war came the Russian Revolution. Fear of Sovietism and Communism caused further unity among the churches of Capitalism. This was not a unity of heaven but a unity of hell. It was a false harmony for an evil earthly purpose. It was fear of

the common people, of those who had not where to lay their heads, of the very folk to whom Jesus addressed himself. It was the fear of the coming into his own of the Son of Man.

Once upon a time Christian society believed in witchcraft. Poor women mostly, some men, and even dumb animals, were tried solemnly, tortured, and outrageously killed, for impossible offences. There existed a whole jurisprudence on the subject. Learned lawyers made themselves authorities in the matter and were treated with grave respect. It was wicked nonsense, out of which men made their living, as judges, advocates, jailers, informers. This nonsense and its literature vanished overnight. The criminals in high position in Church and State who had trafficked in the nonsense and so done harm to society never suffered. They retained their prosperity. It is doubtful if they even regretted. They simply forgot their false learning and their horrible records. And society continued to honour them.

Similarly, heresy and schism have vanished, in face of two World Wars and the Soviet Revolution. This has not been progress but a passing from ignorant persecution to ignorant toleration. Thomas Paine rightly declaimed against tolerance. He demanded the right of all men to be heard. The battle of thought is the most important struggle in the history of human development. Ordinary folk dismiss this battle as though it were something dull and tiresome. The battle of thought is the struggle of life itself. It is the most glorious of all adventures and leads to adventure in the field of physical action.

I first wrote and published an account of my thought emancipation in 1908. I did not view the autobiographical record as a personal story. It was an essentially impersonal, subjective narrative of mind evolution. What happened to me, personally, seemed to me then, as indeed it seems today, trivial. Although the full story as recorded now includes such personal details, which are considered as real events, happenings of consequence by many people, and even stir my own emotions in the telling, they are, to me, incidental to the battle of thought. Without thought life has no real adventure and no true worth.

Poverty, imprisonment, abuse; these belong to the realm of objective adventure: external reality. They are but the brave trimmings of living: brave in the sense of gay, an almost idle colourfulness of appearance of living. What I have been and am in myself; what I am as a thinking being, is important. The thinking is the reality more than the thinker: a matter of imperative and imperious urgency. If careerists kept an accountancy of their inward selves there would be no careerism in the world. The crime of despotism, of dictatorship, and of careerism, is that it destroys all individual power of thought.

Descartes never understood his own maxim: *"Cogito, ergo sum."* "I think, therefore I am." This magnificent motto is no argument for deity, no plea for a futile immortality. It is a clear definition of the eternal importance of the mortal soul of man, of the unchallengeable integrity of the individual. No man can be a slave, no man can be victimised or imposed upon by any system of authority or oppression, who has sufficient courage to accept as the keynote of his life this maxim: "I think, therefore I am."

To accept this maxim is to confront the world with conscience. The individual proclaims in sovereign terms that he is the judge of all things, and that all authority must justify itself before the bar of his reason and of his feeling The maxim proclaims the emotional serenity and sovereignty of the mortal soul of man. If I may not think, then I am not. If I am, then I must think. This is the individual answer to the miserable brood of dictators that bestride the world from time to time. This was the slogan which inspired our Protestant forefathers. It enthused the martyrs of Unitarianism and of Quakerism. Our more immediate Atheist forebears, like Richard Carlile and his immortal shopmen and shopwomen, maintained it when they transformed and developed the struggle from the right of private judgment into the freedom of the press. With it, the Christians defied Caesar.

"I think, therefore I am", has been, since youth, my creed of life. Looking back, I consider my activity to date as an expression of that great historic adventure of the human race, the battle for thought. I consider the expression to be very feeble, and, at the same time, very real. An intense, blundering elementary failure. For humanity, despite world wars, thought adventure has not ended. It is but beginning.

Time has mellowed the egotism of my youth. Alas! it has not lessened the vanity of my careerist and opportunist critics. Their weakness has developed into a constitutional and incurable disease. They have wasted to

titles, decorations, and suits of clothes; so much embroidery. They have lost their souls for the sake of the robes they wear. In each instance, they have donned a cloak of worldly success and hypocrisy.

I realised this truth as a Boy Preacher in 1902. Thus began my career of quiet, suffering, but determined, challenge. I was born again and dedicated my life, without ceremony, but by daily continuous consecration of effort, to the battle of thought which means the struggle for human well-being.

2. THE BATTLE OF THOUGHT

Wait not to be backed by numbers. Wait not till you are sure of an echo from the crowd. The fewer the voices on the side of truth, the more distinct and strong must be your own.
CHANNING

Schism caused me to become active in the Christian Social Mission in 1902. My mind questioned the complete authority of the Church of England. I felt that Christian Communion was something more vital and more human than formal allegiance to thirty-nine articles and a State establishment. I knew that these articles were decided by Parliament and not by the Church. I felt that they ought to be decided by the Church. Not even by church elders but by the bodies of the congregations, and even then, with a certain right of dissent within the communion. Heresy, following schism, led to my withdrawal from all Christian association. I felt that the entire Christian world was but a continuation of Paganism. No section of the Church seemed to me to be really Christian. It was devoid of Christian life and purpose.

My Boy Preacher sermon, on the need to bear each other's burdens in order to fulfil the law of Christ,* was not a success. I defined service as social service, *actual serving*, and not as a church congregation chanting praise into and unto the unknown. Unquestionably, there was a potential atheism in such radical Christian teaching. My colleague, Willoughby Masters, was offended. The girl who played the harmonium looked askance. Other supporters suspected heresy but considered it in the terms of brimstone. Their intelligence would have stumbled at the use of the term "heresy". They preferred the more abusive term "blasphemy". This attitude did not disturb me greatly because my association with them was not approved by my Church of England friends and relatives. The only person who defended me was my grandfather.

The burdens-bearing sermon was not the sole cause of my offending.

I have related the Bradlaugh-Ingersoll incident. Because of my youth, and a certain gift of speech, I was looked upon as a star-turn. Great things were expected of me. Until then my ministerial friends, bland and proud, grouped around the rostrum. My Bradlaugh protest shattered their faith in me by wounding their respective conceits. It disturbed their complacency to be told point-blank that they were wanting in true Christianity. They had never expected such a ruthless observation from me, their boy preacher. My directness and lack of meekness appalled them.

I am quite sure that my speech was inspired, if ever speech was inspired. It was clear and firm. I can feel the inspiration rousing me even now as I look back upon the incident. I felt that I was one of the corner stones of the temple and I knew the would-be builders would reject me. I sensed their hatred, their meanness, their complete sectarian littleness. Such people were never meant to be apostles. How many evangelists, preachers, and divines are born to be such? One can count the number almost. Every true apostle is impelled to be a heretic. The true church, the true assembly of the people, is founded in heresy. That is the true and enduring message of Christianity — heresy spreading idealism throughout the world, and making it a social reality of bricks and mortar.

After the Bradlaugh incident my daily association with orthodoxy became more and more difficult. I was beginning to discard all dogmas.

*See Appendix for Boy Preacher sermons.

3. ANTI-CHRISTIAN THEISM

Beware when the Great God lets loose a thinker on this planet.

—EMERSON

I became acquainted with a system of theology expressedly antagonistic to Christianity. This teaching was to radicalise my outlook in a way never anticipated by its chief propagandist. The system was Theism, as promoted by the late Rev. Charles Voysey, B.A., the minister and founder of the Theistic Church.

Charles Voysey was famous as the former Vicar of Healaugh, whose indictment before Privy Council shook the Anglican Church to its foundations.

The Theistic Church advertised in *The Times* in those days regularly, offering a free batch of literature to truthseekers, etc. I answered one of these advertisements and received several printed sermons from Voysey, including his *Lecture on the Theistic Church, its Foundations, and the Bible.* Their author invited criticism. I read the lectures and tendered the criticism.

I addressed to Voysey a closely-written, forty-eight paged foolscap criticism of his Theistic contentions from what I conceived to be the Christian viewpoint. In conclusion, I expressed the wish for an interview.

Voysey replied promptly. He thanked me for my "long and courteous criticism" of his writings, but feared that "it would be of little use to meet and argue with a man who sees no contradictions in the narrative of Jesus, or in the genealogies, etc." He insisted, finally, that this objection to Christian teaching was all froth in comparison with the moral basis of his contention against the Christian scheme of salvation.

I answered at once. At last Mr. Voysey agreed to grant me an interview. The first interview took place on Saturday, December 20, 1902, at his home in Platt's Lane, Hampstead. It lasted three hours. At first Voysey did not wish to discuss with me, stating that I was too young. While questioning me about my home conditions, he repented and we discussed seriously. From then on, he sought discussion with me and other meetings followed. Voysey's earnestness was impressive, and offered serious food for thought. His approach was rational rather than emotional. He objected to Thomas Paine's Deism on the ground that it employed God to explain the world, but withdrew him from sustaining it. He said Paine's deity was distant and cold, almost unto non-existence. Although Charles Voysey used the word Theism, he had none of the warmth of definition and belief in God that inspired Theodore Parker. Both Parker and Paine possessed an inspired radicalism of social thought to which Voysey was opposed. Voysey read his sermons, and possessed no oratory. Yet he was a force and possessed greatness within the narrow limits of activity he permitted himself. At first I liked him and later I loved him. But I disappointed him sadly.

When I visited him we had tea, but I never met his family at any of these times. I was in a separate compartment of his life. Yet I was his intimate.

The discussions we had were a wonderful experience to me; so much vital education. In that first interview, Voysey stated the Theist's case for immortality. The argument did not impress me, because his approach compelled me to think of Atheists, who had served humanity steadfastly and loyally, without any hope of immortality. Voysey's Anti-Christian arguments moved me seriously and hastened my complete separation from the Church.

Voysey, through his correspondence and in the many private discussions we had, convinced me that Religion was Virtue—the passion of good, that elevated and possessed mankind. It was that virtue enthused into harmony. The disinterested service of man by the Atheist is religion. There is no other way of becoming at one with God. The unconditional service of man defines conduct that must arise out of a life that is in absolute accord with the supreme harmony of the universe.

In reaching this conclusion I embraced, unconsciously, the teachings of Zeno the Stoic.

The most remarkable result of the Voysey association was its effect on my Christian beliefs. Voysey insisted that Christianity was an organised Atheism, an expression of man's disbelief in God the Father. He denied

Christ to elevate God. I sympathised with Voysey's view but reversed finally his conclusion. I denied Christ and abandoned God. For a short time I deemed Jesus a myth but later accepted the historic reality of the man, Jesus of Nazareth. To the extent that early Christianity implied Atheism, and to that extent fully but only, I embraced it. I do so today.

I think that fundamentally the Christian Church is an Atheist institution. Jesus, as a son of man, is a glorious protest against God, the upholder of Crown, State and War. I began to realise that Christianity was not an effort to explain the creation of the world, but a living attempt to recreate human society.

4. I LEAVE THE CHURCH

God builds His temple in the heart and on the ruins of churches.—EMERSON

I closed my connection with the Christian Social Mission in January 1903, but continued my Christian Social Missionary activity independently for another month. My propaganda commanded the best wishes of Charles Voysey but I was oppressed with an ever-widening sense of the fallacy of a textually inspired revelation. I rejected the whole scheme of salvation in a letter I addressed to my former pastor, the Rev. S. Buss, on February 2, 1903.

In this communication, I reminded Mr. Buss of my absence from the services of St. Anne & St. Agnes for some Sundays prior to the date on which my note of explanation was written, and asked him to put from his mind any local prejudice that might therein exist, and to think of me as being a humble truthseeker, loyal to that which he conscientiously believed to be his duty to God. As to whether my beliefs were in error or not, God alone knew. Of one thing I asked him at least to be certain, that in arriving at my decision that Theism was the true religion and in rejecting Christianity, I had not been playing with fire, inasmuch as my guide in arriving at this conclusion, other than the reason with which nature supplied me, was a strictly orthodox one, namely, *Oxford Helps to the Study of the Bible.*

In thus briefly stating my decision, I assured Mr. Buss that, if Christianity was true, it was my prayerful desire to be led to recognise it before I died. I accordingly asked him to pray for me, in order that God might be led to help me to lead a humble, lowly, conscientious, zealous, and good life; and that I might become a source of helpfulness to my fellow-beings, a credit to my country, and a worthy son of God, so that death could never find me unprepared even though the angel messenger called me in the midst of life. I concluded by signing myself his *"Affectionate and humble servant in the Lord"*.

Mr. Buss replied to my letter nine days later. Addressing me as "My Dear Aldred", and dating his letter from "82 Caversham Road, N.W.", he expressed the surprise he had felt at my having suddenly ceased attendance at his church, after having attended there for so long a time. And he was sorry indeed to hear the reason. In his opinion, I had indeed been playing with fire, and had burnt myself seriously. He had told me that I would be no match in argument with a learned and experienced man like Mr. Voysey. And now I told him that I had denied the faith once delivered to the saints, and rejected Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World. I was no longer a Christian, and had surrendered the articles of the Faith, "The Resurrection of the body and life everlasting". Signing himself as remaining my "faithful but sorrowing Pastor", he concluded by averring that I was in great danger, and praying that God, in His mercy, might forgive me and restore me to a right mind. The path I had entered upon was full of danger, and he opined that there was no knowing how much further I might be led astray.

I was stung to the quick by the tone of this reply. It struck me as being a particularly inane and cowardly epistle. I resented its despicable air of patronage and its miserable threatening. The answer was utterly inadequate and contrasted unfavourably with the greater sweetness of my new-found Gospel of Theism. I could do nothing but reply immediately.

I thanked Mr. Buss for his letter, and ex-

pressed my surprise at his misunderstanding alike the glorious truths of Theism, and the causes that led me to embrace them.

I proceeded, in the course of a long letter, to point out that the line of attack he had adopted, was as false as it was cowardly and inane, seeing that he could not have used it in a direct reply to Mr. Voysey. Nor was its substance true, since it was not as a result of a conversation with Mr. Voysey that I had become a Theist, but rather as a consequence of studying *Oxford Helps to the Study of the Bible*, a strictly orthodox book. If Mr. Buss's assertions were true this was a very dangerous book indeed.

Passing on to observe that prejudice was a very serious disease of the reason, which blinded its victims to the truth, caused them to note contradictions where none existed, and led to their reconciliation of irreconcilable statements, I asserted that it was a frequent trespasser in matters religious; and, being for the most part hereditary, occasioned the falling of its victims into three classes, viz.: indifferent worshippers, insane bigots, and orthodox hypocrites. It seemed incumbent on me therefore, as a humble inquirer, to be loyal to the spirit of truth, to examine most carefully alike the claims of "Sacred Scripture" and of those individuals claiming divine revelation, weighing equally in the balance statements for and against them. In this I saw no impiety.

Reiterating the fact of my guide being a most orthodox one, I reminded Mr. Buss that because a Christian ought to be a godly man, it did not follow that a godly man must be a Christian. I asserted that, if the Athanasian creed was true, God was wilfully deceiving his loyal servants when He gave the first commandment, and that the alleged prophecies of Isaiah could not refer to Christ, since they insist on the coming prophet's essential inferiority before the Father. Signing myself his "humble Truthseeker and Servant of God", I put on record the regret that I felt at being unable conscientiously to attend his church any longer. I announced my willingness to repudiate Theism and to return to the Faith if only the Church would establish the need for the atonement, show the reasonableness of belief in the Holy Trinity, and eliminate the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed.

In a postcript, I reminded Mr. Buss that my position as a convert was as dangerous as that of any other convert, whether to or from Christianity. I wished to know further how it was, allowing that God knew more than man, that Genesis I. was a flat denial of the Truth concerning the location in creation of the sun, moon, stars, earth, etc., as established by scientific research.

To this letter no reply was vouchsafed.

Voysey considered it to be "most creditable to my mind and heart" and expressed the pleasure that he felt at the opportunity having been given me to write as I did.

5. *THEISM*

The faith that stands upon Authority is not faith.

—EMERSON

Charles Annesley Voysey was one of the most venerable antagonists Christian theology ever combatted. On my many visits to him at Annesley Lodge, his Hampstead home, I sat always on the same chair I had occupied at my first meeting with him. No subsequent interview left so lasting an influence for good on my character, or played so large a part in diverting the channel of my thought as did that first one. Even at this distance of time, I can recall the intense spiritual power this fiery opponent of orthodoxy exuded.

A thin spare figure, short in stature, but wiry withal; the eyes heavy lidded and strangely cold, lacking all suggestion of that fire which so inflamed the frame of their possessor; the mouth hard and firmly set, eloquent of a long life governed in its various activities by a fixed determination. The first impression conveyed to my mind on meeting Voysey, and receiving his hearty handshake, was that here indeed was a man who was an example to many who flattered themselves on having, through the death of Christ, become one with God.

Thus began my friendship with Voysey. It

lasted for ten years. His last letter to me was written on his death-bed. To understand the effect he had on my mental evolution and moral growth would require a very full and faithful recording.

Charles Voysey merits being remembered. He was an untiring propagandist and an unyielding man of strong character despite his many strange conservatisms of manner and thought, his odd conceits and wee touches of unexpected snobbery. These were but touches like flakes of snow that never settled and vanished almost as soon as they appeared, their threat of coldness melting under the warmth of his affection and the brightness of his smile. Yes: Charles Voysey with all his errors, was a great man. To me he was a teacher and a lovable guide. Under his influence I became a Theist during 1903, and was active, a year later, as a Theistic Missioner.

The Voysey association developed my idealist understanding of life. I believed that one's life should be made to centre about a principle of living. This gave it integrity. That principle did not need to express itself in a vast volume of words, in much ceremony, or even formal worship. I regarded worship as a communion of spiritual association, which gave strength to each of those assembled. It was collective in form and appearance but individual in expression and result. Prayer answered itself because man lived by spiritual food. Material bread was the reward of labour and came from nature, the mother of all mankind. Spiritual food came for the seeking and the desire. It gave purpose and strength to life. Prayer yielded spiritual food to the extent that the prayer expressed sincerity of yearning. This was a doctrine promoted by Charles Voysey.

Under Charles Voysey's teaching, God became a living and affectionate father. He was no longer the fiend who created and allowed to come to life a soul which he foreknew would be damned eternally. Had he been, he deserved to be damned himself. Certainly, I had ceased to stand in awe of such a monster. Fear he might inspire in the minds of others, but not in mine. For I had been born anew in the spirit of truth, and had accordingly come to despise all professions of belief inspired by fear.

I was a sincere Theist. I did not dread any material punishment attendant on ignoring the authority of a deity conceived on the image of barbaric tyranny. My attitude towards such a being was definitely anti-Theistic. A God not pleased with the soul that worshipped at the altar of Truth, not cognisant of his responsibility to man, had ceased to charm one who could be won by affection where he could not be coerced by fear.

Such a change of inward attitude was of tremendous import, and meant more than those who have not been brought up in the faith of Christendom can ever hope to realise. It was only the first step on the heretic's path. I had left schism behind. I had accepted heresy. There was a great distance still to be traversed in my search for truer conception of the universe and man's relation thereto.

Theism, as propagated and defined by Charles Voysey, had a platform of eight planks. Before he died, Voysey repudiated, in private conversation with me, the fifth plank.

The eight principles of Theism were:

1. The right and duty of every man to think for himself in matters of religion.

2. The Absolute Unity of God, involving the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity.

3. The natural humanity of Jesus; involving the denial of his miraculous birth and of his having been in any way more than a man.

4. The Fatherhood of God to all mankind, irrespective of race, creed, or moral difference; involving the denial of the doctrine of the primeval curse, of the necessity for an atonement, and of all punishment except such as is corrective.

5. The hope of an everlasting life of ever-increasing goodness for every human soul; involving the denial of the doctrine that this life is the only probationary one, and that anyone will be condemned to endless torment.

6. The paramount duty of brotherly love, and of practising all virtue uninfluenced by fear of punishment or hope of reward here or hereafter; involving the denial of the orthodox idea of "Salvation by Faith only", and making Religious Belief entirely dependent on Morality.

7. The supreme authority of man's reason and conscience; involving the denial that God has given to any man any Revelation which ought to be accepted without question.

8. The progressive character of our knowledge of God as of all our other knowledge; involving the denial of finality in Revelation, and declaring it to be incumbent on all men to keep their hearts and minds in constant readiness to receive every fresh ray of light

which may lead them to a clearer perception of their duty, their destiny and their Adorable Creator.

Today, it seems to me strange to think that such an elaborate denial of superstition should have to be drawn up, in order to define clearly one's attitude. There are still people to whom even this very modest declaration of liberal thought will be the darkest blasphemy. What small progress in thought and understanding we have made down the ages!

6. CHARLES VOYSEY

It is the right and duty of every man to think for himself in matters of religion.
—VOYSEY

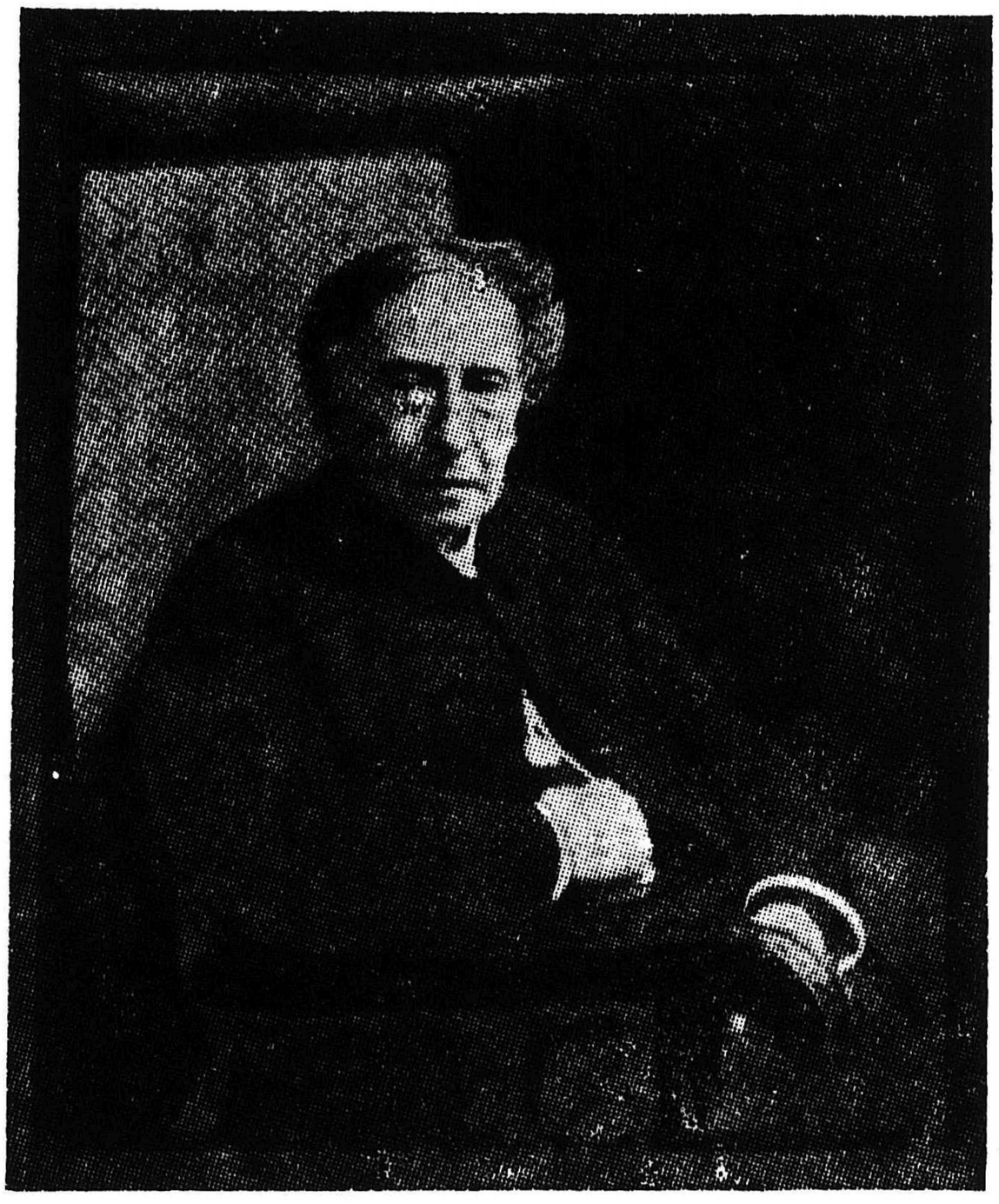
Charles Voysey had something here. He saw in the advance of science, and its development, not the emancipation of humanity, but its enslavement. He used to say to me that evil would come of it and that science would threaten mankind with destruction. In this he was right. He was wiser than many of his contemporaries and the generations that were to follow him.

The friendship between Charles Voysey and myself was a remarkable one. It was unique and absolute. Spiritually, we suited each other, despite the differences in our social status. The harmony survived all my changes of mental development. I believe that time will prove that this friendship was a very important one. It had an impersonal worth and also possessed or expressed much personal joy.

Voysey and I belonged to different worlds. When I first made contact with him I was working as an office-sweeper at the National Press Agency. Some little time after I was promoted to office boy. I had my mother and half-brothers to help to keep. I lived, if not in actual poverty, at least in a state of economic insecurity. I received no income from my missionary work which took all my time when free from my job. It was a week to week struggle. I had no great personal needs and I was not conscious of want. Yet I did not dwell in an ivory tower remote from the world in which my fellows lived. I was not sheltered by my thought or by any professionalism. I studied under circumstances of great difficulty.

True, my status changed gradually. In the end I became a member of the editorial staff of the National Press Agency and, although still in my 'teens, assistant sub-editor and a penny-a-liner paragraphist. Through all these changes, I was on terms of friendship with Charles Voysey.

One of the members of Voysey's congregation was a Mr. Playford. He was the chief accountant of the National Press Agency. His brother, Ernest, also worked there as sub-editor and was therefore my direct boss. Other bosses were W. N. Shansfield, the



The Rev. CHARLES ANNESLEY VOYSEY, B.A. in 1902

editor, and Mr. Reubens who was styled assistant-managing editor though actually he was a business manager and had nothing to do with the editorial department. The managing editor was Arthur Spurgeon who, in 1905, left the Press Agency to become the general manager of Cassell's. An alderman of Surrey County Council, he was knighted in 1918. His claim to fame was his life of *Edward the Peacemaker*, a toadying and false portrayal of the life of Edward VII. He died in 1938 at the age of 77.

Spurgeon I never liked. With the two Playford brothers I got on fairly well although of the two I preferred Ernest. He was quite a churchman and made a pretence of being very religious despite the fact that all the week while at the Press Agency his financial troubles were the talk of every member of the staff. His pretence of religion annoyed me.

Working at the National Press Agency, and later at the *Daily Chronicle*, I was experiencing the daily economic struggle, holding down my job, and advancing my position under the system which I came to loathe more and more each day. The real me was not the day labourer but the young man who was pursuing his theological thought and interest. It was the boy preacher, the student, the thinker, the Theistic Missioner. The day labouring was essential. Without the bread of servitude there would have been no gospeller of freedom.

My background was very different from that of Charles Voysey. When I met Voysey he was 74 years of age. I was 16. The discrepancy in our ages was as great as the discrepancy in our social conditions. Yet I believe that despite these great differences, ours was a true friendship, born at our first meeting and lasting till the day of his death.

Charles Voysey's attitude towards life, despite his Theism, was one of political and social conservatism. He believed in personal security and upheld the powers that be. A monarchist and militarist, he remained so all his life. With his approach to life, he should never have conceived any affection for me or even have tolerated me. Yet he did. To me he was gracious and considerate, rendering loyal, patient and devoted service such as few men give to impatient and impertinent youth.

Charles Voysey played an important part in the evolution of Freethought in Great Britain. He was the youngest son of Annesley Voysey, a well-known architect, and a direct descendant of John Wesley's sister, Susanna. He was born in London, on the 18th of March, 1828, and died in Brighton on July 20, 1912. Educated at the Stockwell Grammar School, he spent four years in a finance office in Mincing Lane and then abandoned the city for a clerical career. He matriculated at Oxford, entered St. Edmund's Hall, and took his B.A. degree in 1851. A year later he married Frances Maria, daughter of Robert Edlin, partner in the banking firm of Herres, Farquhar & Co., and was ordained to the curacy of Hessle, in Yorkshire. He enjoyed this curacy for seven years, during which period he was vice-principal of Kingston College in conjunction with his brother.

These details enable one to understand the natural conservatism of the man. Charles Voysey's instincts were those of the propertied class. His outlook was naturally conservative. It was a miracle for such a man to have been impelled by his own reason to develop a radical attitude towards theology.

In 1859, he proceeded to Jamaica on the invitation of the Bishop of Kingston. Here he became curate under the British Crown of the parish of Craighton, where he remained till October 1860. He returned to England and in the following March was appointed curate of Great Yarmouth. Six months later he removed to the curacy of St. Mark's, Whitechapel, and here he commenced his struggle against orthodoxy.

It is assumed that Charles Voysey first turned to Theism whilst curate at St. Mark's. This is not correct. Voysey was an anti-Christian before ever he was ordained but he took the view, which he often explained to me in private conversation, that the articles of the State church were binding on no man's conscience because they were subject to legislation and could be altered by the voice of Parliament even though the men who voted on the alteration were not Christians.

He regarded the priestly oath to accept those articles and to uphold them as purely formal because even that was controlled by Parliament.

Many distinguished scholars of the Church of England have upheld the view Voysey maintained. It was the view of Dr. Law, the famous Bishop of Carlisle; of Prebendary Parr, the famous Anglican schoolmaster; of Archdeacon Paley, one of the most distinguished scholars the church produced; of Dr. Gilbert Burnett, the famous Bishop of Salisbury and classical scholar; of the immortal

Bishop Watson of Llandaff; of Conyers Middleton, the celebrated divine and scholar; and of the distinguished Archbishop Tillotson of Canterbury.

These are only a few of the great names in the Anglican Church of men who neld that the thirty-nine articles were not binding on the conscience of the minister or priest, and that the State pulpit should be a great free pulpit devoted to the preaching of the truth as the preacher understood it.

It seems strange to me that Charles Voysey took this view at his ordination, and yet afterward denounced Charles Bradlaugh when "the Atheist Member for Northampton" was compelled by the conspiracy of his enemies to take the oath in order to sit in Parliament. Voysey accused Bradlaugh of trifling with the oath and with the name of God. Previously, Voysey had defended Bradlaugh against the bigots.

Voysey's arguments before the Privy Council against his expulsion from the Church of England ministry were identical with Bradlaugh's arguments against the Parliamentary oath. If Voysey was right when he was ordained to the curacy of Hessle in 1852, then Charles Bradlaugh was more than right when he took the oath in the House of Commons in 1886. In point of fact Charles Bradlaugh held the superior position for he had protested his Atheism and demanded his civic right to affirm, whereas Voysey concealed his anti-Christian Theism for a number of years.

In 1863 Voysey was dismissed from St. Mark's Church for preaching a sermon attacking the belief in eternal punishment. He was championed by Dr. Tait, then Bishop of London, who appointed him to the curacy of North Woolwich. Here he received a visit from the then vicar of Healaugh in Yorkshire, the Rev. E. A. Brooksbank, who sympathised with Voysey's heresy and invited him to become his curate. Voysey accepted the offer and returned to Yorkshire where he worked for six months with Mr. Brooksbank, who then retired in Voysey's favour. Voysey thus became the Vicar of Healaugh and in that position made himself famous.

It was Brooksbank's intention to supply Voysey with a pulpit from which he could challenge the Church teaching. Voysey threw his entire energy into expounding the Theistic doctrines which made his name so well-known in the controversies of the religious world. He now began his career as a writer. In the course of that career he issued over 2,000,000 copies of his sermons, a new Hymnal and several thousand volumes against Christianity. He devoted his entire life to driving Christ out of religion and finding a place for God in the Universe.

Voysey's first printed sermon as Vicar of Healaugh discussed the question: "Is Every Statement of the Bible about Our Heavenly Father Strictly True?" Voysey answered this question in the negative.

He followed this up by issuing his famous work, "The Sling and the Stone", which he first published in monthly parts, and subsequently collected into ten large volumes.

Voysey commenced the publication of this work in 1865 and was immediately attacked by the ultra-orthodox party of the Anglican Church. The Archbishop of York started legal proceedings in 1868. Voysey was charged with heresy a year later. For two years he defended his case in the Ecclesiastical Courts and at length appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The case was decided against him. He was ordered to pay costs and deprived of his living in 1871.

Voysey settled in London and founded his famous Theistic Church. Bishop Samuel Hinds organised a committee of 200 persons to assist in this work. The first service was held at St. George's Hall, Langham Place. Four years later the Theistic Church moved to Langham Hall. In 1885, they took over the church in Swallow Street, Piccadilly, which they continued to occupy till a year or two after Voysey's death.

The Theistic Church was the embodiment of Voysey's ideals and was unable to survive the passing of his personality. The Swallow Street Church had an interesting history because it was the first Huguenot church built in England.

Once established as a theistic minister, Voysey gave himself up to two great intellectual tasks. He delivered and published discourses in refutation of Atheism in which he explained the mystery of pain, sin, and death, as being not inconsistent with the love of God. He maintained that Theism was a science of natural theology, and a religion of commonsense and therefore a religion for all mankind. On the other hand he attacked Christianity as being the perpetuation of Atheism because it was based on a lack of faith in the providence and goodwill of God.

He revised completely the prayer book, expelling from it all reference to Christ and

preserving or revising all the services that could be used for the purpose of expressing joy and praise and simple faith in God as the Father of all mankind.

Voysey's most iconoclastic work was entitled *The Testimony of the Four Gospels concerning Jesus Christ.* He published this in 1896.

Towards the end of his life, although I never heard him avow it definitely from the pulpit, Charles Voysey gave up his belief in the future life. He told me constantly in private conversation, in the vestry of the Swallow Street Church, before and after his services, that he found it increasingly impossible to believe in the immortal soul of man. This is not surprising in the case of a highly intelligent man whose life was a study of religion and philosophy. However much one may resent the impertinence of death after having been born, the fact remains that belief in an immortal soul is untenable.

Charles Voysey was one of the founders of the Cremation Society. He certainly could not believe in cremation and a bodily resurrection.

Although Voysey gave up immortality, he clung to the God idea tenaciously and bitterly attacked the worship of Christ.

Voysey's great error was to throw the wrong thing out of Christianity. He threw out Jesus of Nazareth and retained God the father. He ought to have thrown out God the father and left behind Jesus of Nazareth. If you cast God out of Christianity, you throw out all the theology, all the miracles, and all the superstition. You have left only the very human story of Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth, a number of wonderful parables and a simple, central ethic of brotherhood and service. If you cast out Jesus, you certainly throw out a number of miracle stories and also the worship of a dead book; but you retain the cardinal miracle, the idea of God. This idea, as a theological conceit, is utterly foreign to the teaching of Jesus. He believed in God merely as a great poetic conception and he defended, *not* creation, but *re*-creation. The God-creator idea to explain the world, is a theological blot on the universe and a negation of the real harmony of nature.

Voysey was most unfortunate in his converts. Very early in his heresy, Annie Besant became his disciple. She passed through Theism *en route* to Atheism and then *en route* to the gross modern superstition of Theosophy. One of her last efforts as a Theist was to write a really wonderful hymn of which Voysey was very proud. He included this hymn in his famous "Theistic Prayer Book". It reads as follows:

Never yet has been broken
The silence eternal:
Never yet has been spoken
In accents supernal
God's thoughts of himself.

We grope in our blindness,
The darkness enfolds him:
O fatherly kindness!
That he who beholds him
May see with the soul.

Still the veil is unriven
That hides the All-holy:
Still no token is given
That satisfies wholly
The cravings of man.

But unhasting advances
The march of the ages:
To truth-seekers' glances
Unrolling the pages
Of God's revelation.

Impatience unheeding,
Time slowly revolving,
Unresting, unspeeding,
Is ever evolving
Fresh truth about God.

Human speech has not broken
The stillness supernal:
Yet there ever is spoken,
Through silence eternal,
With growing distinctness
God's thought of himself.

In 1906, I interviewed Annie Besant for the *Agnostic Journal.* In the course of that interview, she spoke of Charles Voysey and her conversion by him in 1874, to pure Theism. This was after she had separated from her husband, the Rev. Frank Besant. Voysey was sure that Annie Besant would become a noted Theistic missionary. When she turned to Agnosticism or Atheism he was terribly disappointed.

Voysey was pleased when, in November 1902, I came under his influence and surrendered my Christian faith for his Theistic one. He was again doomed to disappoint-

ment for in due course I rejected Theism for Atheism.

Voysey was much given to using a famous statement uttered by Emerson on his death-bed: *"The deification of Jesus Chist is the grand historical testimony to the meanness of man's thoughts concerning God."*

The statement is true and expresses great depth of understanding. Voysey accepted this utterance and indignantly rejected the deification of Jesus Christ. I accepted the utterance even more profoundly than Voysey. I rejoiced in the meanness of man's thoughts concerning a creative God. I objected, however, to the deification of Jesus as the grand historical testimony of the meanness of man's thought concerning Jesus. We will not accept man as man. We must give him robes and ennoble him. I prefer him in his gutter-rags.

This difference of emphasis explains the wide gulf between Charles Voysey's approach to religion and the social question and my own. Voysey rejoiced in things established. He wanted to reform the world slightly but he believed in it fundamentally. He believed in property but he hated speed. I remember once at Frognal his explaining to me, whilst we were crossing a road and dodging a motor-car, how speed came from the devil, and calmness and the old world order belonged to God. That was his conception.

When the King of Sweden became interested in Theism, and privately avowed himself a member of Voysey's church, although officially he was a Christian monarch, Voysey's faith in royalty knew no bounds.

There is no doubt that Voysey believed in the God of creation as things were and that I believed in the God of change. Hence he turned to the divine abstraction and I turned to the human teacher. By his anti-Christian theology, he really made me a Christian in thought as well as an Atheist.

Light is thrown on Voysey's tragedy of disappointment in me in the following excerpts from his letters to me:

December 22, 1902:—*"It is all as it should be at present. Keep your convictions until you are forced to surrender them. For my part, if a God could create or allow to come to life a soul which he foreknew would be damned eternally, he would DESERVE to be damned himself. I would rather go to hell than live with such a fiend . . . As you are an intelligent fellow, I ask you to think how many Gods you require. I only need but one."*

January 7, 1903:—*"My dear Guy, I never expected you to be suddenly converted to Theism, nor do I think such a change desirable. Go on in your own way, earnest, sincere, zealous, conscientious, and prayerful, and you will then surely be in the best way of learning the truth which God would have you learn . . . I wish you well in your mission. If your message is not exactly like mine that is of no consequence so long as you are faithful to your convictions."*

January 12:—*"An old man and a true friend of yours (that's Me) says that you will do well to be careful with that young brain of yours. It will not easily bear all the strain you put upon it in writing and preaching and thinking. Go softly for a while if you can."*

January 26:—*"From the first day I saw you and noted your EARNESTNESS I was sure God had chosen you to come to the fuller and richer light of his glorious Truth. All you need to do is to go softly, not to be over-confident in yourself, and pray night and day to be humble, not puffed-up or filled with any ideas of superiority in consequence of the enlightenment of your understanding."*

February 8:—*"Your letter to Mr. Buss I cannot value too highly. It contains the same prayer that I made in 1848, when I found myself compelled to give up CHRISTIANITY and take to GOD ALONE. I prayed Him to help me TO GO BACK to Christianity if it was His will that I should believe it. I have prayed so ever since. I wish for nothing better than for you and for myself to live in the SPIRIT of your WORDS to Mr. Buss. I hope you wil always find help and comfort in our dear church.*

August 15:—*"I am glad to hear of your activity. But I must warn you against taking up the 'Solar-Myth Theory' of the origin of Christianity for these reasons:—It is a subject outside all RELIGIOUS interest today. If you could prove Robert Taylor right up to the hilt it would not move a single Christian from his hold on the Scheme of Salvation. Moreover, only a small part of the Christianity myth is solar, or can be connected at all with Sun Worship. You would do more good in attacking the scheme of salvation on MORAL GROUNDS alone."*

October 5, 1904:—"*My dear Guy . . . What I so deeply regret is that you should have passed into Agnosticism through Theism. I had rather never have seen you than to have helped you into your present line of thought. But you will be GUARDED and kept safe if you cling to the BEST VIRTUE you can reach. Stick to goodness and purity and to brotherly love and then, in those paths you will find the God you have lost sight of for the moment. Ever affectionately yours, Charles Voysey.*"

Voysey's disappointment was intense. But he took it sportingly. He remained my friend, even my affectionate friend, till the day of his death.

From the time of my break with Theism till the death of Charles Voysey I was to experience many ups and downs. Always he was there as a friend to advise and to help.

When I contracted, at a later date, an Anarchist association with Rose Witcop, he invited us both to tea at Annesley Lodge to discuss the matter. Voysey, at that visit, urged us to have a Registry Office marriage. He said that he would have liked to marry Rose and me at his church but he stressed the need for registration. His insistence on this arose from the fact of the world as it is and the need to protect the woman partner and any children that might result. There was no legal bar to a registered marriage of Rose and myself. Each of us was single and had no commitments of any kind, moral or legal. It was purely a matter of principle with us. We believed in free association, in free union or free mating. Both Rose and I stated these views to Charles Voysey. At that time, Rose Witcop was not quite 17 and I had not yet reached my twenty-first birthday.

Voysey was sad for he saw that we were adamant. He gave us his blessing and assured Rose that he would remain our loyal friend whatever we did. In 1909, when our son was born, we named him Annesley Guy. The Annesley was in memory of our friendship with Charles Voysey of Annesley Lodge. Many years later, my son named his daughter Annesley Rose thus still further perpetuating the memory of my dear friend, Charles Voysey.

In 1909, as well as becoming a father, I was prosecuted for publishing *The Indian Sociologist*. During the time I was on bail, awaiting trial for sedition, Voysey came to see me at my home. He stated that he wanted to give evidence on my behalf at the trial and he gave me a copy of the evidence he proposed to give. The evidence of Charles Voysey made me out to be so good, and threw so much responsibility on the Indians with whom I associated, that I was afraid that if I agreed to it being given, I would not only be found not guilty but offered a high position in the civil service. Considering the respectable congregation to which he ministered, it was a very brave and bold proposal made by Voysey. I rejected his offer. However, Voysey did not give up. He wrote to the Home Office, declaring his friendship and his opinion, lauding me to the skies. I was informed of his action and was offered, after my conviction, release from prison under certain conditions. These conditions were not onerous and were objectionable only from the standpoint of principle. Despite my rejection of this, Charles Voysey continued to do all in his power to bring about my release.

At Brixton Prison, where I was imprisoned, Charles Voysey was a regular visitor each week. These visits had not been secured without a great deal of protest and action on Voysey's part. When he made application to the Home Office to visit me weekly as my chaplain, the Home Office objected on the ground that an Atheist did *not* need a chaplain. Voysey's reply was that the Home Office had no authority to judge the matter, since a man's religion was a private matter, and he insisted that he was my chaplain. On this point he was adamant and the Home Office gave way. The result was that, for 12 months, Voysey travelled from extreme North London to Brixton, in the South-West, once a week to spend two hours with me in private chat.

On his first visit under this special privilege, the prison governor objected to the interview being private. Voysey maintained that his demand for privacy was lawful and stated that he would not exercise the privilege until the right of privacy was recognised. Again, authority had to give way to him.

Each visit, on his way to prison, he would call on Rose Witcop—a gracious and kindly action of true friendship—and give her £2. From her he would bring me a note and he always commenced by giving me a wee report from her and about her and our son and their well-being. He made it his duty to see that the rent of our home was paid regularly and that the boy wanted for nothing.

Since our home was in Shepherd's Bush this double visit, before and after seeing me in prison, meant a great tax on Voysey's time.

He talked about everything except about

FREE THEISTIC LECTURES

DELIVERED ON

CLERKENWELL GREEN,

April, 1904.

Lecturer - - GUY A. ALDRED.

Chairman (Morning) - Mr. GEO. J. TOOLEY.

SUNDAY MORNING, 11 a.m.

April 17th...Mystery of Pain, Sin, and Death.

„ 24th...On the Resurrection.

„ 31st...The Atonement.

SUNDAY EVENING, 7 p.m.

April 17th...The Divinity of Christ.

„ 24th...Christ and The Brotherhood of Man.

„ 31st...Christianity, Theism, Agnosticism, and Social Reform.

PLEASE NOTE THAT—

WE make NO COLLECTION, introduce NO PERSONALITES, welcome courteous and vigorous opposition, and invite any person who would like to open the discussion to communicate with

GUY A. ALDRED,
Voluntary Theistic Missioner.

THEISTIC LECTURE LEAFLETS

. . FREE . . THEISTIC LECTURES.

DELIVERED ON

CLERKENWELL GREEN,

JUNE, 1904.

Lecturer - - - GUY A. ALDRED.

RELIGION is the Relationship and the Life that grows out of the Relationship between a personal Being called God and a personal being called man. It is the Family Life of the Soul. . . . You can forget it, you can deny it, but you cannot put it off or away. It is a vital thing. It throbs in the blood and moulds and shapes and leads you in spite of yourself. . . . It is as much a part of you as your walking or your talking, or your breathing. You are related to God.

Rev. NACY MCGEE WATERS, D.D., in *The Religious Life.*

Sunday Morning, 11.30 a.m.

June 5.—On Prophecies relating to Jesus.
„ 12.—The Safety of Unbelief.
„ 19.—Agnosticism—a Religion of Manliness.
„ 26.—"The Unknown God?"

Sunday Evening, 7 p.m.

Special Series of Lectures on "The Religious Life"—a Booklet of Four Sermons preached by the Rev. NACY MCGEE WATERS, D.D., in the Tomkins Avenue Congregational Church, Brooklyn, U.S.A. Such a spirit of true religious emotion and sublime piety pervades the whole of this small work—from which we make a quotation above—that its consideration must inevitably prove profitable to all, and to none, more than myself.—G.A.A.

June 5.—What is Religion?
„ 12.—What is Christianity?
„ 19.—What is a Christian?
„ 26.—The Programme of "The Religious Life."

At the end of the Lecture, Vigorous and Courteous Opposition is Invited.

NO COLLECTION IS MADE.

THEISM is a Religion of Common Sense, based on Indisputable Facts. It is a Natural Religion and a Natural Theology. Literature Gratis and Post Free. Apply GUY A. ALDRED, Voluntary Theistic Missioner, 133, Goswell Road, E.C.

"THE SAFETY OF UNBELIEF," by GUY A. ALDRED, 1d., Post Free 1½d.

God during his visits. When I told him that Sir Walter Strickland had written to me in prison his delight knew no bounds. Friendship for me and that quaint snobbery of his, combined to make him feel that my future was assured. Alas! in this matter he was a poor prophet. True, my future was assured. It was to be one of poverty, neglect, and imprisonment.

On the day of my release he welcomed me to his home for the purpose of discovering what could be arranged to make my future, according to his outlook, more prosperous. To help me he gave me £50.

What splendid treatment this was! When I went to prison, the Social Democrats damned me in *Justice*, to whose columns I had been a regular contributor. The Anarchists attacked me in *Freedom* and suggested that I was either a police agent or a tool of police agents. The Hindus, whose cause I defended, treated me with the utmost meanness. Although I was poor, I did *not* publish *The Indian Sociologist* for money, and actually lost money on the publishing and distributing. I was the first Englishman to proclaim my belief in a Republic of India, meaning a non-partitioned India of course. I am probably, except for the late Sir Walter Strickland, the only Englishman to proclaim a belief in such a republic. I merited Hindu support. Charles Voysey, the Tory and the Theist, rallied to my side and atoned for the cowardice and treachery of Hindus, Anarchists, and Social Democrats.

The Indian Sedition trial brought me into contact with E. H. James. Out of that association and the correspondence that resulted, came the Mylius* prosecution. Rufus Isaacs earned status and elevation for stage-managing the trial of Mylius on the altogether impossible offence of criminal libel against a reigning monarch. No legal writer, to date, has dealt with these unconstitutional proceedings honestly or sincerely. All comment on the Mylius case has been cowardly, cringing and morally wrong. The entire business is a disgraceful legal record of toadying. Charles Voysey preached a sermon in the king's defence. It seemed to me that the king possessed enough clerical defenders and did not need Voysey's aid. The established Church supplied sufficient apologists and the law backed the king to a man. It was lackeydom in excelsis.

I cited Voysey's sermon in the *Herald of Revolt* and made a strong reply. Voysey accepted my bitterness as evidence of my courage and sincerity, and avowed himself still my firm friend.

Voysey did a tremendous work in his tense, consistent, unrelenting war on the superstition of Christianity. But he failed to realise the real political significance of Christian origins and he did not understand, therefore, the place of the Christian ethic in social struggle. He had a broad sympathy but a narrow vision. He was great in friendship but small in his intellectual concept. This was his error and his misfortune, but it lent power to his particular work.

In 1912, I published, under the title, *The Rebel and His Disciples*, a complete resumé of early Christianity, in which I eulogised the character of Jesus, and repudiated the idea of God. Writing from his sick-bed, which was to be his death-bed, on April 20, 1912, Voysey swallowed his disappointment as was his custom, and wrote:

"As a piece of research it does you credit, though, of course, I cannot agree with all your conclusions. I wish your fine talents were employed on higher aims; but that is not your fault."

Voysey was wrong. My talents were employed on the highest aim possible, the redemption of mankind from slavery and error. The letter from which I have quoted contained many beautiful expressions of personal friendship. It was in line with the entire tone of his life and of his ten years' correspondence with me.

Perhaps, after all, Voysey built far better than he knew. It is not always given to us to estimate our mission or to understand the functions that we are destined to discharge. Voysey was horrified at the thought that he was responsible for my becoming an Atheist and a revolutionist. He did not appreciate the grotesque absurdity and the truly irreligious character of Theism. Nevertheless, that may have been his contribution to social progress: not to be an Atheist himself but to manufacture Atheists. He was so terribly conservative yet he handed out to me books that developed more and more the Anarchist in my make-up. He was shocked at the idea of Red Republicanism yet I never listened to

*In 1911, E. F. Mylius was charged with criminal libel affecting the honour of George V. The offending article appeared in "The Liberator", edited by E. H. James.

one of his tirades against Christianity without recalling the words of Omar:

"Ah, love, could thou and I with fate conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire;
Would not we shatter it to bits and then
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire?"

Dear Charles Voysey, I have long wanted to express in somewhat incomplete fashion—for I realise my inability to be thorough in the matter—my indebtedness to you. Had I the pen of a Hazlitt or of a Charles Lamb, I would portray you in all your strange mixture of rough heresy and timid conventionalism. I would tell the story of your thought with the affectionate humour that your good nature and earnestness in life deserved. I have no such pen. I can only recall the facts bluntly. This crude record must serve as your memorial until some other pen takes up the task of perpetuating your memory for the edification of generations as yet unborn.

7. THE PRIEST WITHOUT A PARISH

Humanity is the Son of God.
—THEODORE PARKER

It is strange how my vision of life expanded and developed under contradictory influences. Whilst I was struggling with my doubts concerning the truth or otherwise of Christianity the Rev. George Martin sought me out. Martin endeavoured to lead the life of a saint and was a truly beautiful character. Yet he subscribed to ritualism of view and practice, and orthodoxy of belief, that appalled me. We remained friends for eight years. George Martin believed in prayer with intense faith and simplicity. The effect of his belief on me was to destroy completely my concept of God. He believed fervently in the divinity of Jesus. His arguments drove me to a strong belief in the humanity of Jesus as opposed to all ideas of a divine Jesus or Christ.

The influence of and the association with George Martin existed side by side with that of Charles Voysey. They contrasted and tended to exclude each other. Actually, they proved to be vital influences that merged, producing a result that pleased neither Voysey nor Martin. Each had to accept the view that what resulted was the will of God. To do each of them credit, they did so. Martin had a great tolerance of mind but my conclusions hurt him. Voysey's magnificent belief in truth spared him much hurt. His friendship was intensified by disappointment and he treated me always with great affection.

Despite my revolutionary ideas, my mental life has always flowed along an even course. I passed from Christianity to Atheism, and I developed from Boy Preacher to Anti-Parliamentary propagandist, not by spasms, or explosive breaks with my past, but through a natural sequence of development. I thought my way from the one position to the other. Even my associations took form in the same logical and consistent order. There was no violence. Yet I have been described constantly as a dangerous person. I have been depicted, most unjustly, as a man of eruptive tendencies. The smoothness of my evolution has escaped the attention of those who have criticised it.

When I was very young, some boys at school were in the habit of calling after me: "Jumping Jimmy Jesus". That phrase of intended abuse has been hurled at me at different times by boys all over London and it could not have been used as part of a conscious plan. The catch-phrase arose spontaneously from some peculiarity in my walk— a kind of spring as I stride along. And perhaps I looked pious. But despite appearances, I am not pious and indeed I am convinced I am quite incapable of piety which really means goody-goody sneaking. The jumpiness of my walk notwithstanding, I have a serene attitude towards life and I almost stroll in and through danger. But the cockney schoolboy abuse pursues me yet though it is now transformed into an adult slander. Spiritually and politically, it emphasises the notion that I am Jumping Jimmy Jesus. In reality, I have gone calmly along.

My coming into contact with George Martin is an evidence of this and shows how consistently one thing has led to the other.

I would never have known George Martin had someone not circulated my anti-war leaflet on the south side of the Thames, all

over the Blackfriars district, and in the Borough Market. The Christian Social Mission leaflet also reached the market and became the subject of some discussion. A copy came the way of George Martin.

The Mission circular, as I realise now, was utterly inadequate, and quite Utopian. Without changing the economic system, social Christianity is impossible. The Anabaptists were right when they defined Christianity as Communism.

The anti-war circular was a rationalised anticipation of the views of the present-day Jehovah Witnesses with the difference that the reader was not wearied with text after text taken from the Bible, until religion tended to stupefy the mind and turn the person towards insanity. It was an attempt to express in practical fashion Christian Anti-militarism.

This circular had been going the rounds for about seven or eight months, when the Rev. George Martin scandalised my folks by turning up at my home in Goswell Road, the circular clasped in his hand so that the front page was prominently displayed. It was presented to my stepfather who opened the door, as a sort of visiting card.

My stepfather was not an ill-natured man but vision he had none. Looking at what was presented to him he read:

"The LAST DAYS"
PEACE OR WAR
By GUY A. ALDRED

This was all my stepfather saw. He gazed from this strange printed introduction to the man who tendered it. He saw a man of about forty years, clad in a clerical coat, with the clerical waistcoat and collar and ministerial hat. That was normal and his right as an ordained priest. But below his coat he wore a porter's corduroys, strapped in below the knee. Though my stepfather did not know it, these trousers also were his rightful garb for the Rev. George Martin worked in the market as a porter. The combination dress outraged my stepfather's sense of propriety. He was ready to send Martin away. Martin, however, had great patience and persistency. He knew and understood people and could wait quietly although he smiled within himself at their antics. Despite the fact that his life was devoted to serving people, George Martin was completely able to estimate people. His gentle patience overcame my stepfather and he entered. Morally speaking, he put his foot inside the door and would not let it be shut on him. In actual fact, the door had been banged shut in his face. He waited outside in silent rebuke, a living representation of love shut out.

My stepfather had closed the door but he could be heard shouting out: "There's a man to see Dady. He looks a damn queer customer to me!"

By these words my stepfather indicated that to him George Martin looked a cross between a crook and a madman.

This introduction resulted in a friendship growing up between George Martin and myself. As with Charles Voysey, despite differences in age and training, a firm friendship existed between us. Martin was a scholar and I was not. Often when walking through the Borough streets in the company of George Martin, I laughed as I recalled my stepfather's behaviour to him. Those slummy South London streets, in all their dreariness, were dear to the heart of George Martin. I believe he loved every stone and he certainly exuded compassion and understanding for all he met. Had my stepfather but known it, George Martin's dress when he came to visit me was slightly more formal than when he walked with me. Then he had worn his hat. In our walks the hat was left behind in his lodgings and on his head he wore a cap.

George Martin came into my life when I was struggling with my doubts and was emerging from a Boy Preacher into a Theistic Missioner. Long after I became an Atheist and an Anarchist, our friendship was still warm and strong. It ended with my trial for sedition which put an end to my association with my old haunts. The strange beliefs of George Martin gave beauty to his life and also to his manner and appearance. The errors of his theological frills in no way destroyed that beauty.

Martin had founded a very ritualistic Guild of Communion and Service, known as the Guild of St. Matthew. He was High Church in his outlook. To the outcast he was a friend and helper. I wandered round with him on his mission of help and comfort and as we walked discussing Christian teaching, I pleased him by my capacity to listen. On Saturdays I would visit his room and sit and read with him.

I remember George Martin going to prison for refusing to give evidence against a man who had stolen some trifle and then confessed

to Martin as to his priest. Martin had treated the admission as confessional. Summoned as a witness by the police, he entered the witness box and refused to break his vow of secrecy. He received and served a sentence of six months' imprisonment for contempt of court. Martin accepted the sentence like an old-time martyr and persisted in his refusal to tell.

George Martin, when I knew him, lived in an attic room, which he kept scrupulously clean. He did his own cleaning. The room was furnished plainly, the only relief being flowers, which he received regularly from Devon. He had been a minister in Cornwall but had persuaded himself that a Christian minister must live the life of the people and if there are social depths, must sink to them with his people. He moved about a tough neighbourhood fearlessly, but was very gentle with all who erred and suffered. Every day he worked in the Borough Market as a porter, and he would leave the market to take a troop of eighteen down-and-outs across to Lockhart's Tea Rooms for tea or cocoa, bread-and-butter. He gave away all he earned and a good deal of his allowance from home. When not ministering to the people, he divided his life between the most severe introspection and classical studies. He loved scholarship and his society was a joy, for its quaintness, his classical digressions, and his broad human understanding. His studies had little effect on his superstition. His love of Greek, and his interest in teaching it, amazed me for I was his victim.

Martin subscribed to the orthodox church theology with more than enthusiasm. Scholarship had broadened his moral sympathies and in his love of service he knew no distinction of person, creed or error. He was a most lovable and sincere individual. His attitude towards life influenced me greatly and explains much of my later propaganda reactions. He taught me, by example, to be unafraid of consequences and to serve the poor.

On June 4, 1933, *The People* published an exclusive article entitled: *"Meet The Priest Without a Parish."* A sub-heading declared: *"But Everyone Loves the Rev. George."* That was the first I had read about the Rev. George Martin since 1902. With this interview before him, the reader may judge how George Martin continued his ministrations down the years:

"He is a strange old man—this Priest without a Parish. He has no church, no living. No congregation gathers on Sunday to hear him preach.

But go down the Borough Market and hear what they say about the Rev. George Martin, the man whom everyone loves.

"My first glimpse of him was not encouraging. I had climbed up to the fourth storey of a tenement building in Maze-pond, a narrow street.

"He stood across the stairway—a tall gaunt figure with a tangled grey beard and anything but a welcome gleam in his fiery eyes."

When I knew him, George Martin was clean-shaven. I can understand his resentment at what he must have considered an intrusion. But when the reporter stated that he had brought a donation of food to be distributed among the poor children, Martin's attitude changed.

" 'For my children,' he remarked delightedly. 'I'll see that they get them. Pray come in.' "

This was typical of the man and his simplicity. He was being intruded upon just the same. His simplicity in his love of service did not face the fact. There is something pathetic, and yet humorous, about the man as he is portrayed in this anecdote. There always was. Humour—touched with sadness and not a little tragedy.

"He beckoned me into a dingy little room. A washing of shirts, socks and linen was stretched on a line across the ceiling.

" 'I do my own cleaning,' he laughed.

"A greasy mess of pudding was sizzling on a pan.

" 'And cooking,' he added.

" 'But tell me,' he pleaded, 'where you got to hear about my children. Poor little mites, they go about the market picking up scraps. Whenever I can, I gather them together, about a dozen or so. Then I look at their hands. If they are dirty I send them home to wash. And when they all have clean hands I give them a cake each, and offer up a little prayer. I love little children.' "

The reporter could not persuade Martin to talk about himself or explain why he gave up his living in the Church. George Martin sacrificed an income of £700 a year to work as a porter in the Borough Market at about eighteen shillings a week, which he gave away after he had earned it by the actual

sweat of his brow and the tiredness of his limbs.

When the reporter asked Martin why he had given up his living, the reply was: *"That is something I prefer not to talk about."*

The report continued:

"So I changed my tactics and talked about the old shoeblack whose outfit he had helped to buy. But Mr. Martin was not to be drawn.

"'A nice fellow,' he said. 'I knew his father.'"

From other sources, the reporter learned how George Martin comforted the sick and bore the burdens of the poor.

"The Rev. George is allowed a remittance from his people, wealthy estate owners in Plymouth.

"But he stints himself so that he may walk the streets o' nights and give sixpence each to the poor down-and-outs in need of a bed."

The reporter describes what happens when anyone is in trouble in the Borough. They "see the Rev. George" about it! A costermonger approaches the old clergyman:

"'Bill's inside,' he says. 'Had a drop too much on Saturday night.'

"'How much to bail him out?'

"'A pound would do it.'

"The note changes hands and the Rev. George passes on without waiting to be thanked.

"He meets old Jim.

"'How's your bad leg this morning, Jim?' he asks.

"'It's a bit painful, sir,' confesses Jim.

"Right there and then, in the middle of the street, the Rev. George will offer up a prayer for Jim's bad leg, and Jim will go off feeling better."

The poor do need to be served. When I passed from Theism to Atheism I carried into my Atheist propaganda this concept of social service and ministering.

I had learned, from people in various circumstances, who seek advice and assistance, and seem so puzzled by the struggle for existence and all that it entails, that there is truth in the idea of helping those who ought not to be helpless. Recognising this fact, I still do not understand why George Martin never realised that charity, even continuous and genuine charity, is not enough. It can never compensate for social injustice and inequality, although it may be a personal atonement.

George Martin died in December 1946, at the age of 82.

His will came as a surprise to me as it must have to others who knew him. He left £22,429 (net personalty £22,082).

Although he bequeathed the money for the service of the poor, it seems an inadequate and somewhat foolish will. The essential bequests were:

A bank account for the benefit of the poor in the Borough of Southwark.

£100 to Edward Spice, verger to the Dean of Southwark, "in recognition of his courtesy shown through many years".

£1000 on trust to pay the income to a student at St. John's College, Cambridge.

£500 to St. Breward's Parish, Cornwall, for the poor and needy.

The residue to the Bishop of Southwark and the Mayor of Southwark for the poor of the Borough of Southwark.

Describing Martin's life in Southwark, after he gave up his rectory in Cornwall in 1893, the *Evening Standard*, London, (May 5, 1947) stated:

"Southwark will remember the Rev. George Martin, friend to all down-and-outs, the priest without a church or parish, "the modern St. Anthony" . . . working among the poor, denying himself everything but absolute necessities.

"The gaunt, bearded man in tattered clothes worked in the slums from 7-30 in the morning until 6-30 at night, when he went to bed."

This is a true picture of George Martin. His ritualism and theological orthodoxy were most obnoxious to me and totally irreconcilable with his really great scholarship. George Martin was a scholar—and very much a saint. Superstition and orthodoxy made it impossible for him to understand early Christian teaching, although he tried to live and to interpret it in all his conduct.

APPENDIX

BOY PREACHER SERMONS

1. SERVICE: THE LAW OF CHRIST

(Delivered on November 10, 1902, in the Gospel Hall, Holloway)

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—Gal. VI., 2

My text is found in the sixth chapter of the Apostle Paul's epistle to the Galatians, the second verse. Paul is not the best interpreter of Jesus and some of the earliest Christians regarded him as an apostate rather than an apostle. He was the founder of Christian dogma and not the teacher of Christian thought. He breathes slavery and submission to authority whereas Jesus brought liberty and challenged authority. But he experienced rare intervals of grace and enjoyed glimpses of truth. His picture of charity is epic literature and is assured of immortal rank in the thought of the world. It is as useful to remember as it is beautiful to conceive. To the same high order of understanding belongs Paul's definition of the law of Christ. Paul may have defended and urged servitude. If he did so, let his teaching be rejected and condemned. But he defined the message of Jesus as Service. Let this be remembered and practised: *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ!"*

What an injunction! If from the time that Jesus died on the cross to the present day, the Christian world had remembered this ethic and faithfully pursued it, what a different world we would live in! How much less would have been the travail of man! Instead, the history of Christendom has been a history of warring churches; of opposing creeds; clashing personalities; poverty and property; wars, and rumours of wars, defended even by theologians as evidences of the mysterious handiwork of God. Christianity has been preached as the Gospel of Success, whereas Jesus made the Word Incarnate identical with failure, was himself a failure without qualification, and taught that the purpose of life was not success but service. We should drink of the cup of bitterness from which Jesus drank; we should be baptised with the baptism of suffering; but we must not aspire to lord it over our fellows as the Gentiles did, the Pagans or the followers of Caesar! The world is wrong. It is crazy with wealth and power and authority. It is not the world of Jesus but the world of Caesar. The vision or private wealth is not the vision that inspired the struggle of Jesus, and lent grace to his life. His vision was service. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

The language is clear and explicit. It is to be understood in the strict, literal, and grammatical sense. Paul says that if we would be Christians, if we would follow Jesus, we must serve each other; our wealth and talents must be common; we must belong one to the other; we must allow none to sorrow needlessly; we must not starve another whilst we wax fat; we must serve the fatherless, lift up the fallen, restore happiness: serve. Not grandeur but grandness. Not dominion but infinite yearning, infinite understanding. Not power but power to serve. Jesus filled the world with compassion and the Christian ages have filled the world with passion. Creed and greed where Jesus taught and exuded love—whimsical, smiling, understanding. Dying to serve the folk, jeered at and deserted, filled with a tremendous weariness he prays: "Father, forgive them! They know not what they do."

Down the ages men have persecuted genius and have known not what they did. It is ignorance not intent. And so the great understanding response, the magnificent commentary of pain arrayed in failure: Forgive! In making this utterance, Jesus ranks with his lily of the field, and Solomon or Caesar in all his pomp, wears no mantle equal to the robe of compassion that Jesus wrapped about the nakedness of his seeming failure. His agony taught the message: The Son of Man has come to serve! Whoso would be a Christian must give, not take: must endure, not inflict: must minister unto the people. To be a son of glory, to have genius, and to be truly great,

one must serve and not seek to rule the people.

This teaching of service destroys the Christian Church but founds Christian society. It undermines throne and altar but it honours struggle. It makes life not a worship but a struggle. It makes Truth not the creed but the integrity of mind and conduct. It breathes peace, but the peace of conscience, the peace of service, the peace of unyielding martyrdom, the peace that brings not peace but a sword. Not the sword of kings but the sword of man, the sword of truth, of justice, of the kingdom of heaven on earth into which the rich cannot enter. Churches may totter, kingdoms fall, social systems change: but down the ages, until at last man shall know and live the truth, will thunder the message: *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ!"*

Service is not just the message of Jesus. It is the law of Christ. And who or what is Christ? Jesus is not Christ. Jesus is the man, the messenger, the bearer of the word, the truth-carrier, but not the torch. The word inspires him but he is not the word. Christ is the torch, the indwelling urge, the inward must, the concentrated enlightenment. Jesus was possessed with the Christ-spirit and is called Christ from the poverty and happiness or unhappiness of our expression. Christ defines the function of Jesus and expresses our sense of his worth and genius. It is serviceable but inaccurate. Jesus died: but the Christ-power like the spirit of genius, survived his betrayal and execution.

The law of Christ is not an **exclusive** obligation imposed on us by Jesus. It is the law of human well-being. Until, and unless, we do bear each other's burdens, society will continue in folly, crime and disease. Wars, prisons, poverty, and hypocrisy must flourish. Bunyan's Mr. Badman and Dickens' grotesque hyprocrites will occupy the chief seats in Church and State and mistake themselves for humanity. The Devil will rule where God should influence. Yet the Devil is a very mortal foe. He will preside in the marketplace and rule over the Court only so long as men permit. The day we bear each other's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ, the devil will disappear from society. The New Dispensation will dawn and we will enter into the inheritance of the Kingdom, a new heaven, and a new earth.

2. JESUS AND GOD

From a sermon delivered by the author on January 25, 1903, under the auspices of the Christian Social Mission, Russell Road, Holloway, London, N.

I am separating myself shortly from this Mission for the same reason that I declined to be limited by the Anglican Church, of which I am a member. I object to the Church of England attitude towards the so-called Nonconformist. I do not believe that conformity is the original Christian virtue. On the contrary I believe that Christianity arose in rebellion and manifests itself in rebellion.

John Knox was degraded from the priesthood for breaking his ordination vows and being a rebel, guilty of that old crime, "contumacy". The Reformation martyrs were rebels. That is why they were burned at the stake. Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, man of caution, and courtier, driven at last to revel in his own understanding, was a rebel when he made the magnificent sign of burning his "cowardly" hand—the hand that signed the fear-impelled recantation!

I am opposed to the Anglican Church when it condemns Nonconformists: but I am no less opposed to the exclusiveness of the Nonconformist bodies. Exclusiveness is not a Christian virtue but a worldly affectation. I do not believe that Christiantiy can be defined by any creed or expressed in the terms of regulated articles or elaborate catechisms. I believe that Christianity is a way of life, a method of approach to the problems of existence, and not a mere system of worship. I do not think it matters so much what men think of Jesus of Nazareth as a teacher, as how they live and interpret that teaching. The worship of Christ is not necessarily the outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible Christian. To my mind, a Unitarian may easily be a better Christian than a Trinitarian. But it does not follow that even Unitarianism is Christianity. What is Christianity turns upon Jesus' view of God and of man's relationship towards God, and how far the alleged Christian understands the significance of the views of Jesus. . . .

The Orthodox would monopolise Christianity and deny the right of Christian fellowship to those who are called Liberal Christians. Did not William Ellery Channing have to fight against the system of exclusion and denunciation in religion? And did not even

Channing's Communion exclude, in life, Theodore Parker and drive him into even further independence? In death, it acknowledged him and prefers him to Martineau. The preference is justified. There is no comparison between the genius of understanding and warmth of feeling and imagination of Theodore Parker and the sonorous, ineffective, platitudes of James Martineau. Parker interprets Jesus of Nazareth. Martineau entombs the same Jesus. Parker makes Jesus live for mankind precisely because he dispenses with idolatry. Martineau chokes the soul of man and kills the reality of Jesus simply because his one concern is idolatry. He flatters to destroy. Precisely on this account the orthodox rank him high above Theodore Parker. In so doing, they deny the truth and the purpose of Christianity: they manifest their anti- or Counter-Christianity. For the system of exclusion and denunciation is not merely not Christian. It is a negation of Christianity. It is Counter-Christianity rampant. It is virile opposition to the teaching and revelation of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Orthodox conclude that Unitarianism, by a tremendous stretch of generosity of mind, is the very limit of Christian Communion. It is possible that they would not concede so much were it not that, otherwise they would have to dub as Infidel, Milton, Newton, Locke, Clarke, and Price. They feel that to repudiate men of such genius is to deprive the Christian Communion of the very flower of the spirit. Even the mediocrity of orthodoxy hesitates at paying such a price for its exclusiveness. Even mediocrity is both appalled and elevated by genius. So Unitarianism is at last granted a concession: it may be allowed a wee smuggled patch in the consecreted land of Churchianity. All of which is to the good so far as it goes: but it is merely an urchin glance from beyond the threshold at the real garden of Christian grace and beauty. For Unitarianism is not Christianity by the grace of concession and Trinitarianism is not Christianity in the plenitude of its power and glory. On the contrary, Trinitarianism is merely a confusion of Christianity, a gross and mischievous error, and Unitarianism is but the beginning of Christian understanding. Unitarianism is the introduction to Christianity not the inevitable appendix.

This fact is, itself, but an introduction to a veritable volume of facts overlooked in amazed dismay by the majority of Christian Preachers. Trinitarian exclusiveness of communion has harmed the Church, depressed the pulpit, stagnated the preacher, closed the Bible, and denied the message of Jesus. It has dwarfed the manhood and rendered worthless the word incarnate in Jesus. It has diffused error where the purpose was to shed light. And it has reduced the records of the Christian Brotherhood to one black with bloodshed and murder, like the record of an Empire, inspired with the lust of conquest and expanded dominion. It has promoted death where it should have established life. It has promoted death, spiritually, morally, mentally, socially, and economically. For the essence of life, in times of slavery, is heresy: and heresy in struggle, heresy leading to harmony, fellowship in freedom. Not realising this fact, the Christian Church established looks to the past and not to the future. Its great preachers have been and are not any more. Its great exponents once were yet are not today. It has a past but no present and no future. It dies reluctantly, looking towards yesterday. It retreats from living action to dead worship. It not merely dies today but it kills yesterday. For whosoever denies the living sons of men today denies also the son of man of yesterday. And these dear orthodox preachers are all wrong.

Christianity is *not* the property of a sect. It is the wealth, the *common wealth,* of humanity. It is the legacy of all mankind. It cannot be shut up in a few lines of an abstract and ridiculous creed or compressed into a few dull propositions. Christianity is a declaration of fire, light, freedom: the proclamation of the integrant soul of man. It cannot be parcelled into the commonplace. The soul of man is regal—the concentrated regality of the universe. And a creed is plebeian—an article of cloddishness inarticulate.

The men of creeds were *not* the great preachers. The greatest Christian preachers do *not* belong to yesterday. They have to be born. Christianity has not been expounded finally. It has yet to be expounded. If the Church is dead, it is of its own volition. Dead it may be: but Christianity is not dead: for its work is not completed. Its task is only maturing. Christianity commenced a new era in the history of the world; a new era whose laws and teachings we are fulfilling and destroying.

The story of the ministry of Jesus, of his absolute loneliness, of Gethsemane and Cal-

vary, of his revelation, is an epic of biography and symbolism that will never die as long as man lives. His revelation of God is a wonder of beauty and mysticism. The glory of his teaching is its simplicity, bold, clear, beautiful and substantial, like granite.

In the Fourth Gospel we have great play made of Jesus's revelation of the Father. The Jewish record of the tradition to be found in Matthew is almost as insistent and metaphysical. In both instances the idea of revelation is Greek. It is the singular purity and usefulness, the purpose of the incarnation, that is Hebrew. In plain language we are told that Jesus has revealed or declared the Father.

What does this mean?

That most orthodox of Congregational Ministers, who mistook Trinitarianism for Congregationalism, in his work on the *Priesthood of Christ,* endeavours to explain the sense in which Jesus revealed the Father. Dr. Parker published this work in 1876. He had commenced his ministry in London seven years before—at the Poultry Chapel, on September 19, 1869—and he had complained, in his opening address, of "the puerility" God had "to tolerate in His services". He deemed it a proof of the divinity of Christianity that it had not "been ruined by its preachers ere this" and a wonder "that it has survived the cruel kindness of its shallow expositors". Joseph Parker did not realise that he, in his narrow and false doctrinarianism, would add to the number of those shallow expositors in his own person. But for his incredible capacity for orthodoxy his expositions might have been militant where they were only dull, his sermons removed from the mediocrity of superstition to the genius of understanding. Yet he did tremble on the threshold of enlightened exposition. And his explanation of how Jesus revealed the Father needs but subtle correction to become both true and beautiful. I adopt it boldly to my own ends.

Jesus did not reveal the *existence* of God. The idea of God's existence is pre-Christian.

Jesus did not reveal the *Fatherhood* of God. This idea is pre-Christian also. Apart from innumerable pre-Christian pagan statements of the idea of God's Fatherhood, there are repeated Old Testament references.

Jesus did not reveal or proclaim the idea of the *mercifulness* of God. This also is pre-Christian and Jewish. Moses taught it.

The essential conception of God he did not declare. But he embodied the idea of God—*visibly*. He made the father *intelligible*. He incarnated his word and made that word distinct from his own. He that saw and heard Jesus, saw and heard God.

Jesus did *not* reveal God as the author of the universe but as the servant of man—dwelling in harmony and fellowship with his fellowmen—manifest in the universe. He did not teach a God who could command but one who yearned to be useful. Jesus revealed God as the Great Physician, the divine philanthropist, the lone warrior and pioneer of ideas and ideals, the glorious embodiment of supreme failure and rendering perfect the harmony of the universe. Let us ask where Jesus saw God, and the answer is in the healing of the sick; the feeding of the hungry; the acceptance of humiliation without incurring indignity; tendering sympathy yet experiencing no defilement; stooping to death to triumph over annihiliation. Failure in a world of Power and Oppression leading through service to a world of harmony and love.

Such was the poetic grandeur, such the prophetic vision, the mighty yearning, the glorious mysticism, that Jesus called God.

The God of Jesus *was no* Paley watch-argument needed to explain the universe. He was the personified inspiration of its change. He was not the world's creator but the world's recreator, the destroyer of what had been and what was, the author of what was to be. The God of Jesus was the providence of the world to be, the sustainer of the oppressed in their day of tribulation.

3. PARABLES OF JESUS

Heading notes of sermons on the Parables, delivered during 1902 and 1903

Parables special feature of Jesus' teaching. Possibly to avoid conflict with authority yet deliver his message. Establish his human reality. Spoke with homely authority of experience. Not the orthodox and stagnant authority of the priest or rabbi.

Hearers teach themselves. Speaks to his time. Therefore speaks to all time. Addressed to those who *have ears*. What men think for themselves they never forget. Symbols based on real experiences more vital and abiding than abstract words.

Parables unrivalled. Left untouched by criticism. Only Jesus could create Jesus. Mark personality genius. *"Him who spoke as man has never spoken."*

Each parable spoken group bystanders not unborn generations. Eternal audience, always contemporary. Jesus immortal. Interpret nature as common man sees it. Burroughs and Thoreau.

Christian theologians forget this. Why Jesus taught in parables. (Matt. XIII, 10-12)

Rebukes Christians who read into parables fall of man, etc.: all theological items.

Parables great not because Jesus was Son of God. Jesus Son of Man, and mystically, God, because parables great. Words simple but replete and deep with Truth.

Jesus viewed entire living world, moral and visible, as a mighty parable. It became new at his touch and a living spiritual world.

PARABLES CONSIDERED:

The Sower. (Matt. XIII, 3-8, 18-23; Mark IV, 3-8, 14-20; Luke VIII, 5-8, 11-15)

Blue waters lake: on fringe sand, crowd: freshness and freedom open-air. Possibly saw some countryman sowing seed on slope of hill behind beach.

"Behold! The sower went forth to sow."

Seed is the WORD. Receptivity of soil. Truth cannot be known without response.

The Wayside Soil. Pathway trodden by hard feet, the scattered seed finds no entry. The hardened heart, routine daily life, monotonous, persistent. Familiar piety.

"From all hardness of heart and contempt of the Word and Commandments, Good Lord deliver us."

The Thin-surfaced Soil. Mere layer of earth covering hard rock. Seed cannot spread downwards and take strong root. Its growth is sudden and short-lived. Word *not* received as an obligation. Cannot stand strain of life.

The Choked Soil. Alien growths of the cares and pleasures of life choke and strangle growth of Truth. (See Luke VIII, 7-14)

Fault not with soil. Wasted for want of weeding. Seed *must* find root. It *must* have *room to grow.* By "care", Jesus means not purposeful thought but the division of the heart, over-pressing anxiety, fretting, which exhausts the energies of life.

Mark's version states seed is choked by *"the lusts of other things entering in".*

The Good Soil. Simplicity is thoroughness. Newman said that the man who was wholly honest was already perfect.

The Mustard Seed and The Leaven. (Matt. XIII, 31-33; Mark IV, 30-32; Luke XIII, 18-21)

The characteristics of the Kingdom. Dynamic. Change from within.

Mustard Seed the outward sign Kingdom.

Leaven the inward looking.

"Small as a mustard seed." Qualities of heart, strength, and healing. Sermon to cheer the minority.

Hidden qualities of expansion and penetration; qualities operate within foreign substance until all is leavened. Great parable of courage and influence. Depths of inward life and strength rather than by the width of outward energy movement known.

The Hid Treasure and *The Pearl of Great Price.* (Matt. XIII, 44-46)

Jesus taught Truth as a treasure, a pearl of great price. Truth is royalty to life. Truth enthroned makes man "master of his destiny". Treasure suddenly and unexpectedly discovered by labourers in field: pearl reward merchant's long search.

The Hid Treasure. Labourer stoops down and suddenly discovers a treasure. *Hid at feet,* not dropped from skies.

The Pearl of Great Price. His life-work. find "goodly pearls". He *seeks* the pearl. Completeness.

The Good Samaritan. (Luke X, 30-37)

Who is my neighbour? Great and typical parable. Simplicity and depth. "Every man your neighbour." Jew "no dealings with Samaritan". Human nature sacred. Samaritan "proved himself neighbour". The Levite and Priest failed. They "passed by on the other side".

The Pharisee and the Publican. (Luke XVIII, 9-14)

Shortest and most searching parable.

Lazarus and the Rich Man. (Luke XVI, 19 et seq.)

Not persuaded though one rose from the dead.



GUY A. ALDRED
June 1906

CONTENTS

PART III. DOGMAS DISCARDED (concluded)

8. A Challenge Refused
page 75

9. The Peel Institute
page 77

10. Theistic Missioner
page 79

11. The Freethought Missionary
page 83

12. Fleet Street
page 84

13. The "Daily Chronicle"
page 87

14. Robert Blatchford
page 88

15. "Saladin" (W. Stewart Ross)
page 90

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Author
page 73

Author's First Atheist Announcement
page 81

Total Abstinence Handbill
page 82

Freethought Leaflet
page 82

Fleet Street
page 86

Author's Testimonials
page 96

PART III. DOGMAS DISCARDED (concluded)

8. A CHALLENGE REFUSED

Between a thinker and a learned man there is the same difference as between a book and a table of contents.—RENAN

It never occurred to me that I ought to give up preaching. On the contrary my desire was to extend my activity. I acted boldly, although I advanced with some hesitation. I felt quite assured yet I was timid and a little shy. I had renounced Christianity for Theism. It seemed natural, therefore, that I should seek to convert the world to my ideas. Lance in hand, I set out to find a "defender of the faith" worthy of my steel. This was heresy in audacious mood.

At this time, the Christian Evidence Society held meetings on Clerkenwell Green every Sunday morning. I attended these meetings and, with unnecessary timidity, questioned the lecturers—if such the society's speakers could be called. The speakers were hooligans and brow-beaters. Most certainly they were not foemen worthy of any thinker's steel. They were devoid utterly of truthfulness in expression and sincerity in approach. As I look back on their platform behaviour, I am still convinced that each one of these so-called lecturers was a hoodlum and a blackguard. Timidity in approaching them was stupidity on my part.

A merely learned man might fear the mob, for learning is inclined to be timid. Learning is but a dressing of the mind and possesses no vitality in itself. Men do not die for learning and by mere learning they do not change the world. Life is wisdom, not knowledge. Without despising knowledge, my quest was wisdom. How to learn. What to learn. The purpose of learning. How to use learning. To what end did one clothe one's mind in learning. These were the issues I had to face in my search for truth. The questions I put to these Christian Evidence Society speakers on Clerkenwell Green helped considerably for I was invited to attend the Sunday Morning Adult School meetings of the Peel Institute in order to refind Christ. I never hesitated to go where invited and I accepted the invitation only to lose God instead. It is said all roads lead to Rome. There was no doubt that at this time every path was leading me to Atheism.

Thus in April 1903, I commenced lecturing at the Peel Institute in defence of Theism. My lance was poised for I believed that I had found the Christian champion for whom I had been searching in the Rev. T. Bedworth Jones, Pastor of Enfield Lock Congregational Chapel.

Partly owing to the fact that I worked in Fleet Street, I was an enthusiastic reader of *The Clarion*. It is possible that I would have been a fervid reader of Blatchford in any event, since his then recently found interest in Freethought and zeal for its propagation fitted in with my desire to understand theological heresy to the fullest possible extent. Fleet Street however made it easy for me to get access to *The Clarion*.

I do not have a great opinion of Robert Blatchford as a thinker. His militarism, which permitted him to discover "the German menace", and made him a warmonger of the most extreme type, appalled me. And of course he supported Labourism, which has been reduced to a tragic mockery of working-class struggle. Blatchford's style of writing was too simple to be truly thoughtful. Yet he conducted an agitation which compelled thousands to think on the subject of religion and he must have had some influence for good. Anyway, Blatchford was all the rage at this time. His *Merrie England*, *Britain for the British*, *Not Guilty*, and *God and My Neighbour* were household words. Naturally, the Churches hated and feared his popularity.

Blatchford had told his readers that science had destroyed all the religions of the world. In an address to the members of his P.S.A., on April 12, 1903, Bedworth Jones "replied" to Blatchford. He maintained that there was no conflict between science and the Christian theology and he insisted that Christianity was founded on love.

Actually, this was a stupid contention.

Science, being organised knowledge, certainly could *not* have love for its basis. Indeed, if one considers the persecutions in which the Church has engaged it would be difficult to maintain that Christianity is based on love. I see much martyrdom but little love in the record of the Christian centuries. And I do not recall only the Marian martyrs which surely condemns Roman Catholicism. What of the immortal Servetus whose dreadful persecution indicts Trinitarian Protestantism for all time!

Bedworth Jones plunged proudly into depths of imbecility. Evolution, he averred, gave no account of beginnings. One could have asked him who claimed that evolution did. And how did he expect evolution to explain things, when evolution had to accept beginnings, *in order to explain development?* His statement revealed a mind of astounding ignorance. Bedworth Jones contended that religion explained beginnings. Of course, religion did and does no such thing. *It assumes beginnings and gives those beginnings personality.* The assumption explains nothing and is itself unexplained and unexplainable.

In his nice Christian way, Bedworth Jones concluded that Blatchford was sweeping away all that Christians held dear. *The Clarion* editor was giving the people godless Socialism in exchange for the sweet and precious truth we had in Christianity.

The hypocrisy of Bedworth Jones and all his Christian colleagues was evidenced by the fact that, when Blatchford pushed his Socialism aside to support the disastrous world war of 1914, *not* a word was said about the godlessness of Blatchford. It was forgiven. And what did that war do? It swept aside the teaching of Jesus. It prepared the way for post-war years of misery, the Soviet Revolution, a Second World War with its toll of ruined cities and devastated humanity and preparation for a Third World War. All supported by the complacent mediocrity of the Rev. Bedworth Jones, who took the anti-Christian line of least resistance as required by the traditions of Christian orthodoxy.

His address was reported in the *Enfield Chronicle* for April 12, 1903. It drew from me the following challenge to debate, published in the columns of the same paper a week later:

Sir—In your issue of April 17 appeared a summary of Rev. J. Bedworth Jones' sermon delivered at the Lock P.S.A. of Sunday 12th inst., in which Mr. Jones dealt with Mr. Blatchford's articles on science and religion, which I have read all along. Now, let me say, I see as well as Mr. Jones does, that God is indeed our loving Father and has, as such, the first and foremost claim on hearts; and it is this sense of my obligation to God that has caused me to revolt from the Christian scheme of salvation through Christ.

Now, I should be much obliged, sir, if you would allow me through your columns to challenge Mr. Jones, either publicly or privately, to meet me in debate and to refute my statements that the Christian message is neither required nor yet is it a message of love. If publicly then let the public be charged for admittance to debating hall, the money thereby received to go to some local charity, and the decision to rest with Mr. Jones.

I am a Theist by belief, and I shall rest my arguments upon "Oxford Help to Study of the Bible", a strictly orthodox book published in 1896. I shall also bring with me "The Testimony of the Four Gospels concerning Jesus Christ" by Rev. C. Voysey (1897) and "Prophecy" by the same author. Although I shall carefully study, I shall not prepare in writing my case; this in order not to take an unfair advantage of Mr. Jones. Meanwhile, if he decides to accept the challenge, then I will forward him on Theistic literature.—Yours obediently,

GUY A. ALDRED

P.S.—My object in seeking a debate with Mr. Jones is to learn the truth, the highest most reasonable, most ethical truth concerning our loving father God.

The reply from Bedworth Jones was published in the *Enfield Chronicle* the following week, May 1, 1903, under the heading, *"A Challenge Refused"*.

Dear Mr. Editor—The friendliest of greetings to Mr. Guy A. Aldred. He is a complete stranger to me, and I know nothing of his "statements" beyond what is contained in his letter. May I say at once that I have no intention of accepting his challenge. The learner will never obtain "the highest and most ethical truth concerning our loving father God" by splitting lances. The truth or falsehood of the Christian message will never be proved to Mr. Aldred or to the world by newspaper columns or by public controversy. It will only be proven when Christians have taught their fellow-men by letters and deed that Christianity can do its work. So long as the Christian message touches the lives and consciences of men it will remain its own vindication, and when it ceases to vindicate itself no arguments will be needed to convince the world that Christianity is dead.—Yours faithfully,

J. BEDWORTH JONES

The Manse, Enfield Highway, 25-4-03.

Here I am the thinker emerging. The learned man is being by-passed. Commonsense is coming into its own. What has orthodoxy to say? It serves up platitudes. Bedworth Jones retires from controversy. Christianity must teach by work, etc., etc. Well, it has taught since then. War and destruction. Hiroshima. Kenya. Malaya. And it utters still the same mendacious

platitudes. This is not Christianity. It is licensed falsehood. It is ecclesiastical blasphemy in excelsis.

Thus did orthodoxy treat me in 1903, when I was seeking the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, seriously and earnestly. Not yet seventeen I yearned for spiritual understanding. I asked and was answered not at all. I sought and did not find. The Church had one reply—it ignored my request. And so the heretic went on his way to further heresy.

9. THE PEEL INSTITUTE

Those who believe in a God of Love must close their eyes to the phenomena of life, or garble the universe to suit their theory.
—WINWOOD READE

The Peel Institute was a local Quaker Christian Brotherhood, situated, in 1903, in Woodbridge Street. Later, it removed to Clerkenwell Green. For three years I was connected with this assembly. Here I met the Quaker banker who really ran the Institute, George Masterton Gillett. He had a brother, also a banker, Rowntree Gillett. It puzzled me when I thought the matter over, as I often did, how it was possible for a Christian to be concerned in such a completely worldly business as banking. When I joined the Peel Institute George Gillett was a local Borough councillor with a great anxiety to become a member of the London County Council, on the Progressive ticket. It was deemed a kind of disloyalty to the Institute not to help Gillett and his cronies to realise what appeared to be a very modest ambition. Of course, whilst striving for this position, he was still seeking re-election to the Finsbury Borough Council.

A member of the Finsbury Borough Council from 1900 to 1906, Gillett in 1910 realised his county ambition when he was elected to the L.C.C. From then till 1922 he retained that position. In 1922 he became an Alderman. He was an Alderman up to 1924 but in 1923 was chosen as Labour M.P. for Finsbury. This latter position he maintained till 1931. His progress after his election to Parliament is worthy of note: Secretary, Department of Overseas Trade, 1929-1931; Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Transport, 1931; and Commissioner for Special Areas, 1936-1939. He died, Sir George Masterton Gillett, on August 10, 1939. I do not know that Clerkenwell or Finsbury gained much in the way of special amenities from his successful careerism. The Peel Institute was simply his centre of activity, the stronghold from which he sallied forth to do battle at each critical stage of his campaign to advancement. Gillett had as his local working secretary, an old man named Tosh. Supposedly elected by the Peel Institute, actually he had been appointed and was controlled by Gillett. Tosh was guilty of some slight misdemeanour and, despite his age, was summarily dismissed by the Institute and Gillett.

In London in 1903, the term Progressive did not have a Tory connotation. There it meant a Liberal in Municipal politics. In Parliament the Municipal Progressive was a Liberal or a Radical. I found when I came to Glasgow that there was quite a different meaning and that in Glasgow the Municipal Progressive was identical with the London "Moderate" and actually meant a member of the Tory Party.

During 1904, when I became first, a National Democrat and later, a Social Democrat, Gillett was still flirting with Liberalism. Subsequently he joined the Labour Party and thus became a Member of Parliament. He followed Ramsay MacDonald into the National Government and considered, I suppose, his career one of political success. What an outlook!

In 1903, the Peel Institute was a hotbed of political liberalism of the *Daily News* variety. The *Daily News*, at that time, had a meaning that the present generation would not readily understand. The meaning has passed with the traditions of Bouverie Street, where it was published, and of which it was the outstanding feature.

Membership of the Peel Institute brought me into contact with John Burns, then in his Radical heyday. John Burns was born in 1858. It was two years before I was born that he joined the Social Democratic Federation.

He was an aggressive Socialist propagandist for about five years. In 1890, he turned from Social Democracy to Radicalism. For my part, I was to turn from Radicalism to Social Democracy. My understanding of economics was not too clear but my natural tendency was towards radicalism of political thought. I was a regular attender at the meetings where John Burns spoke for I admired his robust style of delivery. Standing four-square in front of his audience, his broad Scots face emanating forceful determination, he was, to me, a public speaker worthy of the name. Also, believing as I did in the fullest enquiry, his attitude to questioners pleased me. John Burns was not afraid of any question. It may be that his platform manner arose largely from egotism, but in public speaking it was most effective and inspiring. Though later I came to regard him as a renegade, the memory of his vigour on the platform still intrigues me.

Many are the good stories told of the breezy behaviour of John Burns in the course of his political life. It is only fair to say that every one of the excuses made by Burns for his acceptance of Cabinet office was copied at a later period by Labour M.Ps. Burns sacrificed much of his integrity for popularity and a place in the sun under capitalism but he walked back into obscurity with magnificent courage in order to maintain his attitude of opposition to war. This he did with a sardonic contempt for the whole gang of parliamentary warmongers.

Except that he remained silent when he should have spoken, the attitude of John Burns towards the First World War was correct and uncompromising. He was not a Pacifist. He was not pro-German. He simply held that a workers' representative had no right to vote war credits or support capitalist war. He adopted a sound Socialist position, in contradistinction to the Labour Party.

Concurrently, I also associated with that most illiterate Labour fakir, W. C. Steadman. Sometime President of the T.U.C., this man was typical of the stolid, unimaginative, wage-labourer mind. He would not be stumped by his errors, even though he expounded arrogant ignorance. His "Gawdthanking" Pleasant Sunday Afternoon eloquence horrified me. Nevertheless I got a great deal of fun out of his ill-treatment of history, his misplacing of events, dates, and persons when he answered questions. One meeting I recall particularly. Whether a slip of the tongue or not, he made Nelson win the battle of Waterloo. There had, of course, to be a member of the audience who interrupted good-naturedly enough, with the correction. But would Steadman accept the factual correction? No, he would not. He persisted in his statement that Nelson had won Waterloo and nothing would make him change his assertion. Clearly, he held that the speaker was always right even when in error. This careerist, and he was a miserable, pretentious careerist, died in 1915.

For over twelve months, I delivered addresses before members of this Peel Institute Brotherhood, in defence of Theism. I insisted that man was truly religious only in so far as his outwardly expressed views concurred with his inward outlook on life, and his beliefs were trained scientifically and cultivated. Theism was true, and the belief in God was based on indisputable facts. Only in so far as Theism was frankly anti-Christian could this belief be contended for as an essential ingredient of a natural religion and natural theology. Only in so far as it was the centre from which to attack all "revelation" was Theism commendable to every rational man.

Belief in God, I argued, demanded a further belief in future existence. The latter, however, I openly admitted, was unsupported by any real evidence, and was, therefore, unscientific; which led back, of course, to my old theme of benefiting mankind here. In any case, this was the best course to pursue. Unlike Mr. Voysey, I denied the objective efficacy of prayer and doubted God's power to attend to it. My inclination was towards a mechanical deism, which I styled Theism and defended with fervour.

Despite the brave words I uttered as a Boy Preacher, and despite my very real belief that faith involved works, my thought was coloured by a great deal of metaphysics.

At the time of first entering the Peel Institute, I had not reached a real sense of material values, I had not translated my righteousness into a concrete reality. True, I suffered no inhibitions and believed in reading of all kinds. I had a Chinese respect for the printed word, especially if it were heterodox. I had a natural tendency towards Red Republicanism. Radical ideas did not alarm me. Actually, I found them intriguing. Consequently, early in 1904, I embraced strong radical views, far in advance of the pietistic nonconformist conscience liberalism

for which the Peel Institute was a breeding ground. Later, I concluded this observation applied to all chapels and bethels run and supported by social parasites.

The Peel Institute was an offshoot of the Friends' Meeting House, situated in St. John's Lane. The Institute was open every night in the week as a resort for the men—never mind the women—in the neighbourhood to find recreation in mutual intercourse as an alleged alternative to the public house.

During my membership, I considered that the Peel Institute exercised a most damaging social influence. It contributed to the destruction of that very home life its leaders pretended to uphold. Working men went to the Institute every night, straight from work, in order to play dominoes, billiards, and card games of various kinds; or to read newspapers, magazines, and books. They frankly confessed that they left "*the Missus at 'ome to look after the kids. Oh! anything does for 'er.*" What a philosophy! And what an influence!

Night after night, from seven to eleven-thirty, unmarried men were trained into an utter disregard for the companionship of their future "wives". I could not help feeling that they were being trained to regard women as underpaid housekeepers and the routine victims of male lust. Remarkable to relate, the most rare attendants at the card tables, and the most punctual at the Adult School meetings were the Freethinkers.

A class for the study and discussion of the Bible was convened at the Institute on Sunday mornings. When the Atheists withdrew from this class, the Bible study gathering collapsed.

George Gillett, the President of the Peel Institute, professed to have the interests of the workers at heart—wanted to give them baths, etc., so long as the rates did not go up too much! The whole Institute sought to lull the members into a support of the President and his colleagues for their "jolly good fellowship" in consenting to work among the exploited in perpetuating a system of prostituted commercialism of principle!

In Finsbury, as elsewhere, under capitalism, the spirit of grab, the gospel of being successful at the expense of others, that was fostered and nurtured in the hearts and minds of local progressive jerry builders, bankers, and private printers by the wretched profit-mongering tendencies of capitalism, was rampant. One saw around him, as a result of the class control of the necessities of existence, a vast amount of mis-directed labour, pauperising parish relief, mis-employed science, sweated child, woman and man labour; luxury on the one hand, starvation on the other.

In order to solve this problem all that the Progressives did was to form bogus Labour and Trade Councils prior to each election, the members of which were mostly private capitalists and representatives of Trade Unions that did not exist. The Peel Institute was the centre of this ramp. As such, it furthered my social education.

10. THEISTIC MISSIONER

Events that seem very small often bear very great results. NAPOLEON

My questioning of the Christian Evidence lecturers caused me to become a Voluntary Theistic Missioner in April 1904. It also produced a very enthusiastic chairman. George Tooley lived near me in Compton Buildings. Both George Tooley and his wife could not subscribe to the Christian faith but they were not prepared to declare themselves Atheists. They believed that there "must be something somewhere" and that the world ought to be filled with love and kindness. Theism, with its loving Fatherhood of God, suited them well and so they became my keen supporters and friends.

Tooley worked in a soap factory and as a result of visiting him on Friday afternoons at his work, I gained familiarity with the manufacturing of soap. Tooley was a hard worker and it pleased him to instruct me in the workings of his trade. The higher type of self-educated working man, both he and his wife pursued culture under difficult circumstances in an effort to understand and improve themselves mentally.

On Sunday mornings, George Tooley took the chair at my meetings. He was a proficient chairman and an able controversialist. At times he would come to my weekday meetings

but every Sunday morning he and his wife would be there, one to chair the meeting and the other to give enthusiastic support. The weekday meeting ended often with my going home with them where we discussed and chatted for many an hour. When I turned Atheist, the Tooleys remained Theists. Our break in attending the same meetings was made with great reluctance. Soon after this Tooley changed his place of work and we lost contact with each other. I missed often his efficient chairmanship.

The Theistic Mission continued till September 1904, when it became a Freethought one. I distributed Theistic literature freely through the post, and held meetings on Clerkenwell Green and at Garnault Place. At all these meetings my grandfather was a regular attender, turning up on his own and listening to all I said. When the meeting was over, away he would go his own way. When we saw each other on my return home, he would point out what he considered was wrong, not in my thought and utterance, but in my style and manner. His only comment on what I had said would be that logically I must develop into an Atheist—which I did.

I can remember his being present when one of my meetings was broken up by riotous Christians. This was the first occasion on which I came into conflict with an audience. It was both an experience and an education. I was disappointed and disillusioned for I did not think the violence had been deserved. Christians have a right to be heard only to the extent that they are willing to hear. A fidel has exactly the same secular right to be respected as an infidel. That was my view when I was a Christian Boy Preacher. It remains my view today. There is something wrong with the Christian who thinks otherwise.

At the time that my meeting was rushed, I was well known in Clerkenwell for my activity in connection with Peel Institute social life. I worked with leading local Christians in the cause of total abstinence. I assisted the Nonconformist shining lights of the Liberal Party in Central Finsbury and Islington in the struggle to realise their political ambitions. This was to my lasting shame but I had not taken the full measure of their opportunism and careerism. All my cooperation and acquaintance ought to have protected my meeting from disruption.

I was opposed in 1904, as I am now, to mere temperance advocacy, which I consider an apology for moderate drinking. In the end, this serves as no protest against drunkenness, for no one can define moderate drinking. Temperance is like limitation of armaments; a security for evil and not a challenge to or negation of evil. True, I was opposed as vigorously, yet reluctantly, to prohibition. There was the right of the individual to be respected. There was also the fact that prohibition served the purpose of the booze racketeer by making drinking illicit. It added the spice of adventure and audacity to the ugly pursuit of evil. I objected to self-indulgence being made to appear romantic but I shared the moral views of the prohibitionist. I saw drink as unmitigated vice. To my mind the way to oppose it was by example and personal integrity. Also, by giving the common people an improved environment. I believed in the power of moral suasion and very simple, direct propaganda. It seemed to me that my attitude called for Christian endorsement. I was amazed to find myself the victim of that strange Christian love of Free Speech and Free Thought.

On the evening of Tuesday, August 16, 1904, I held, as previously advertised, a meeting at the corner of Garnault Place and Exmouth Street, Clerkenwell. The subject of my address was *"What Constitutes Freethought?"*

Commencing at 8.15, I spoke for thirty-five minutes, and then threw the meeting open for discussion. As there were neither questions nor opposition forthcoming I distributed two lots of handbills, sold some pamphlets, and then remounted the platform in order to bring the meeting to a close. I then noticed that, on the outskirts of the crowd, there was a "gentleman" who evidently had not had the courage to take the platform to air his opposition although I had offered any opponent an equal time with myself. From his stand on the outside he was vehemently denouncing me and my arguments. I directed attention to his conduct and challenged him to continue, facing the crowd. My Christian friend refused and he had now around him the hooligan element that will support any "fun" at a public speaker's expense. With their support he kept up a continual interruption. Not satisfied with verbal noise, they now rushed my platform. This they did three times. Three times I remounted the platform and commended their love of fair play. Amid a fourth rush, I faced police interference, and the meeting ended.

That night, on my return home, my grand-

AUTHOR'S FIRST ATHEIST ANNOUNCEMENT

CLERKENWELL FREETHOUGHT MISSION;

For the promotion of Religious, Scientific and Secular Truth, and the advocacy of the right and duty of every man to think for himself in all matters relating to his own welfare and his duty to his Brother men.

Leader:

GUY A. ALDRED, 133, Goswell Road, E.C.

Announcements:

August & September, 1904.

OPEN-AIR MEETINGS:

AUGUST: CLERKENWELL GREEN, SUNDAY, 7 p.m.

Aug. 7.—The Mission of Freethought.
,, 14.—Calvary's Lesson.
,, 21.—The Christian Message: Its Glory and Despair.
,, 28.—Christianity, without Dogma.

GARNAULT PLACE, TUESDAY, 8.15 p.m.

Aug. 2.—The Perfection of God.
,, 9.—Is the Soul Immortal?
,, 16.—What Constitutes Infidelity?
,, 23.—The Nonconformist Conscience.
,, 30.—Bhuddism as Taught by Bhudda.

SEPTEMBER: CLERKENWELL GREEN, SUNDAY, 7 p.m.

Sept. 4.—Nature's Beneficence: A reply to G. W. Foote.
,, 11.—"God and My Neighbour."
,, 18.—The Trinity.
,, 25.—Man: His Origin and His Gods.

[P.T.O.

GARNAULT PLACE, TUESDAY, 8.15 p.m.

Sept. 6.—Theistic Impossibilities.
,, 13.—Agnosticism, A Reasonable Religion.
,, 20.—Renan's "Life of Jesus."
,, 27.—Our Debt to the English Church.

THESE LECTURES are given under the auspices of the Association for the Study of Religious Truth.

SPECIAL WORD to Freethinkers, Scientific Theists, and Agnostics: your help in assisting on the cause **would be greatly appreciated. Services are better than Contributions.**

THE SUBSCRIPTION entitling **Subscribers to Right of Membership** is 2d. Monthly. Cards of Membership and full particulars may be had of GUY A. ALDRED, *Hon. Sec.*

A PUBLIC DEBATING ROOM will be opened in October. Particulars later.

PLEASE NOTE that Mr. ALDRED and his helpers take no fees for their services and defray their own expenses.

CONTRIBUTIONS to the funds urgently needed, and gratefully received, and duly acknowledged on Monthly Lecture Lists.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Received by collection and sale of literature, August 7th. 1/6.

LITERATURE: The following, published by the **Association,** may be had as follows:

"The History of the Bible, and its Relation to Religion," by Rev. MINOT J. SAVAGE. - FREE.

"The Safety of Unbelief," by GUY A. ALDRED.—1d., Post-Free, 1½d.

BALANCE SHEETS issued quarterly, beginning August 7th, 1904.

Mr. ALDRED will be glad to be of service to any strangers who may be in mental or domestic distress. His help will be none the less sincere, because, for the most part, its form cannot be financial. A hearty sympathy and healthy assistance will be reserved for all who come, and differences of opinion shall have no place in our welcome. "Come thou with us and we will do thee good."

Please do not throw this away.

PEEL TOTAL ABSTINENCE SOCIETY,

FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, ST. JOHN'S LANE, E.C.

ON

Thursday, March 10th, at 8.30,

A

Lantern Lecture

WILL BE GIVEN BY

GUY A. ALDRED.

SUBJECT:

"To-morrow's Citizens and their Present Environment."

Chairman - - Mr. J. DUKE.

ALL SEATS FREE. DOORS OPEN 8 P.M.

EVERYBODY WELCOME.

W. WILLIAMS, TYP., 351, PENTONVILLE RD., N. 6945.3.04.

TOTAL ABSTINENCE HANDBILL
1904

CLERKENWELL FREETHOUGHT GOSPEL MISSION.

Leader. Rev. GUY A. ALDRED, Legally Appointed Minister of the Gospel of Freethought.

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT THAT:

1 The title of "Reverend" was a purely honorary one, conferred on Christian Preachers by themselves no earlier than the 17th century?

2. The decision of the Privy Council on January 21st, 1876, to the effect that the title of the "Reverend" was a purely laudatory one, the use of which was not restricted to the Ministers of the Angelican Church, conferred that title on all atheist propagandists who cared to claim it?

3. The religion of the Nazarene was a religion for slaves, conceived in ignorance and nursed in priestcraft?

4. God does not exist; never did, never can, and never will exist?

5. Since atheism implies, as a philosophic state of mind, honesty of thought and expression, every honest Atheist ought to expound Socialism in antagonism to Christian Charity, for which Labour, as the source of all wealth pays?

IF NOT,
YOU ARE INVITED
to attend
THE GREAT GOSPEL MEETINGS
convened every Monday at
GARNAULT PLACE, E.C.,
by the
Rev. GUY A. ALDRED
(Minister of the Gospel of Revolt).
Discussion and Opposition Invited.

FREETHOUGHT LEAFLET
May 17, 1906

father went to his secret cupboard and produced a collection of Atheist pamphlets. He told me about Richard Carlile and Charles Bradlaugh and advised me to study these works, some of which were published under the title of *The Atheist Pulpit*. It was my duty, averred my grandfather, to study Atheism and every phase of religious and philosophic thought.

In the matter of religion, he said it was more important for me to read John Bunyan's *Life and Death of Mr. Badman* than the more popularised *Pilgrim's Progress*.

I followed his advice, with the result that a month later my mission became an Atheist one. I ceased for ever either to advocate or believe in the relationship or the life that grew out of the relationship between a personal being called God and a personal being called man. My soul was marching on to a full embracement of the cardinal doctrines of Atheism and Agnosticism.

My grandfather delighted in poetry and on the evening when he introduced me to Atheist writings, he gave me a volume of Shelley and another of Byron. He told me the story of the Titan God, Prometheus. If I wished to serve mankind, he warned me, I must expect scorn and abuse. But, he continued, I must maintain my position with perfect sweetness. I must not permit persecution or neglect to make me bitter. He asked me to consider the lofty heroism, the enduring patience, the unselfish love, and the perfect sweetness in service, the tragic story of Prometheus inspired. He pointed the moral by dwelling, most effectively, on the lines:

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy power which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, to falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free.

My grandfather's parting injunction that night was that I should discover actual and symbolical truth in this story of the immortal pagan, and embody the lesson in my life.

11. THE FREETHOUGHT MISSIONARY

Wheresoever the search after truth begins, there life begins; wheresoever the search ceases, there life ceases.—RUSKIN

I established the Clerkenwell Freethought Mission to register the fact that I wished to render service to my fellows but I could no longer do so as a Theist. My aim was not Atheism. I subscribed to a kind of Huxleyan Agnosticism. I was not quite sure that God did not exist. I was not certain that there was not a Heavenly Father. Now I can view this as somewhat foolish timidity. I questioned most apologetically the evidence which was adduced in support of God's existence. I did not deny but simply doubted.

In this state of mind, I attended the public forum at Hyde Park. Here I discovered the university for which I was seeking! Controversy here and elsewhere, especially in Clerkenwell, caused me in the course of the next few months, to deny absolutely the possibility of any God's existence, so long as the term God was held to relate to a universally dominating personality. By Christmas 1904, I had surrendered Huxleyan Agnosticism for the wider philosophic agnosticism which declared that no person—since all persons were relative beings—was able to solve the riddle of the universe, the enigma of existence. Hitherto, I had been agnostic only to God's existence, passively atheistic to his practical use. Now I became not merely atheistic for all practical purposes, but militantly netheistic towards *his* being and doctrinally agnostic towards the ultimate nature of all being. From a loose heterodoxy I had passed to the embracement of a convincing and consistent philosophy offering the counter-affirmative to the puerile absurdities of theological metaphysics.

I found it impossible even to subscribe to Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable. The existence of the unknowable and the absolute was no longer a matter of doubt and speculation. It seemed to me that there must be an unknowable, underlying all existence. It seemed to me to be equally true that there

could not be an unknowable. I was not prepared to purchase respectable admiration by pretending that the unknowable was spelt with a capital "U". This was Herbert Spencer's way. It was as objectionable to me as Thomas Huxley's meek and mild and ever-so-gentle Agnosticism. The unknowable was the permanently unknown. It was the complete negation of the known. It was beyond my ken and must be denied. Myth or reality, it required to be denied. I was an Atheist plus. I was a Netheist. I not only denied God. I was prepared to destroy him. And so with the unknowable. To me it was not and must for ever remain so.

Many of my former friends, in an endeavour to maintain our association, made concessions to me. They pretended that I had lost faith only in a personal god. They told me that this was Pantheism and not Atheism. Pantheists refuse to reduce the infinite and incomprehensible to the level of personality. They hold that the noumenon is supra-personal.

To my mind, this subtle distinction between the impersonal and the suprapersonal threw no light on the issue. It told me nothing about the nature of the noumenon if indeed the noumenon could be said to have a nature. That which was supra-personal must be impersonal. Such was my reasoning.

The highest man knows in nature is associated with ideas and thoughts associated with personality. I failed to see what knowledge man could have of that which was supra-personal. The noumenon was not a moral creator for nature was red in tooth and claw, a perfect organisation of mutual murder. The heavens were too magnificent, as was the whole scheme of nature, to have been the inventions of one personal being. This indicated some *impersonal* creative force. Both these approaches to estimating and understanding the universe had their basis in Atheism.

For this reason I was a Netheist. Supra-natural force, or personal force, if God existed, he required to be denied and destroyed. The task of struggle unto emancipation was mortal and human.

Such was the propaganda of the Clerkenwell Freethought Mission.

12. FLEET STREET

Fleet Street—a place where head-lines are mistaken for news; and such news is told as truth whenever the telling can be made sufficiently scandalous to be retailed for profit—ANON.

Parents are very trying folk at times. They imagine that their offspring should be indebted to them for being born. Actually, of course, there can be no indebtedness. On the contrary, an apology ought to be forthcoming from the parent to the child. The impertinence of parents' attitude takes my breath away.

When I recount the circumstances of my birth many people object to my making it known. Their argument is that I am here in the world and that the facts of my birth do not matter. I agree but my reaction is not the orthodox one of hiding anything that is not completely conventional. If registration does not matter, why register? If registration is of importance, why tolerate falsehood in the business? And why cover up?

The effect of my mother's bigamous marriage was to deny me all legal existence. My father's bigamous marriage emphasised my legal non-existence. The behaviour of my half-brothers on my mother's side left nothing to be desired from a family standpoint. The affection my mother had for me I could not deny. But she made demands on me that she had no justification in making in view of her second-marriage falsehood. Her affection notwithstanding, she had not brought me into existence from love of me.

After losing my job in the doctor's office, I had to set about getting another. The doctor had given me a month's wages when I left and this I had handed over to my mother. It was my custom to give her any extras I earned. The trouble was that this month's wages was spent within the week and the next week found me feeling uncomfortable

because I had not a week's wage to bring in to the home. I do not say that my mother was in any way mercenary but a clear understanding between parents and children seems hard to establish. I searched for work but each day felt more uncomfortable. I said nothing to my grandfather knowing that his answer would be to give me his own money. So I just did not go home and slept out for three nights. I did not find this to my liking but it was somewhat better than the feeling of guilt I had when at home. I should not have had this feeling but have it I did and I was determined to stay away from home till I got another job. The job I landed was the office-sweeping job in the National Press Agency. As I have said, from this work, I rose to a penny-a-liner for the London Letter column and assistant sub-editor.

Whitefriars House, the home of the National Press Agency, directly faced Carmelite House, the house of the Harmsworth Press. A familiar figure in those days was Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe). I can remember how, when in 1904 plain Alfred Harmsworth became Sir Alfred Harmsworth, Spurgeon of the National Press Agency rushed his congratulations across to Carmelite House.

Work at the National Press Agency introduced me to the mysteries and corruptions of Fleet Street. For nearly five years I worked there in a sub-editorial capacity. These five years were a period during which the cant of the world of journalism was made plain to me. I was disgusted by the stereotyping of the opinions that emanated from this hub of the world of ink. The journalistic systematisation of prejudices sickened me with its splendidly-equipped machinery for stifling the spirit of true literature. Mediocrity abounded and enslaved where genius should have inspired and emancipated. Intelligence wore chains so willingly that it suffocated itself by its own acceptance of servitude.

I described this system in a paper I read to the Camberwell branch of the National Secular Society in November 1905. This paper was revised and published in the *Agnostic Journal*, London, for January 13, 1906. It was republished in *Freedom*, London, for July 1907. Many years later I included it in a series of my essays, *A Call to Manhood*. Below is that part of the article that relates to my employment:

"In addition to twelve months' experience on the editorial staff of a London daily paper, the writer spent close on five years in a sub-editorial capacity in the office of a certain well-known press agency. Now, the cant of the whole system, the stereotyping of opinions involved—which have both, for some time past, oppressed him—have led to an open rupture, and he turns his back upon that journalistic systematisation of prejudices which offers the very antithesis to the spirit of true literature.

"A man possesses a little fortune, and being of mediocre talent, and possessed of an overpowering vanity, desires to pose as a 'leader of public opinion' in the particular village in which he lives. He accordingly determines to run a local newspaper, and having registered it under as large an array of titles as any compositor can reasonably be expected to set up, he begins to turn his attention to the 'copy' side of the journal. Not being in that financial position which would enable him to pay a proper price for local intelligence, and having of necessity to publish more than the paid reports of marriages, etc., he puts himself in communication with one of the London press agencies.

"Here we find at a price of 2s. 6d. or less a column, stereotyped columns of 'Words of Wisdom', 'Science Gleanings', 'Wise and Otherwise', 'Facts and Fancies'. 'American Humour', 'Hints for the Home', 'News of the Churches', 'Weekly London Letter', 'World of Women', 'Business Abroad', etc.—all of these columns being the result of 'paste and scissors' operations on the various morning, evening and weekly journals that find their way into the sub-editorial sanctum. In order, however, that the columns in question may look as original as possible, as much reprint, without the acknowledgment of its source, is indulged in as is compatible with a non-infringement of the Copyright Acts. Then there are political leaders—mostly of the nonconformist conscience order—representative of the editor's opinions. which are written, set up, and stereotyped in London, and sent down to the journal in question all ready for printing. In view, also, of the recent affectionate protestations the dissenting pietist has conjured up for the Labour movement—a purely secularistic, not to say hypocritical, movement, being of the earth, earthly—a column of 'Labour Notes', by a 'Labour M.P.', is also supplied. The mild views of this gentleman are yet further diluted by the editorial pen of the agency 'boss'. Then the special correspondence and other news, retailed by the various London and larger

provincial journals, are distilled and condensed, and several columns of plagiarised news offered at the usual half-a-crown per column.

"And so one finds in different parts of the country exactly the same paper with the exception of local advertisements published under different titles, according to the locality Yes, there can be no doubt about it. The type is the same, the headlines, the illustrations, the setting, and the views are all the same; the one paper, except the space retained for local advertisements, is an exact facsimile of the other. Count up the price of the columns at half-a-crown each; learn the sale of the journal at a penny a copy; subtract the former cost from the latter amount; add the extent (in equivalent monetary value, if possible) of the editor's satisfied vanity, and you have a mediocrity's profit through journalistic exploitation. Consider the ease and small amount of energy exerted in obtaining a fair income by the agency's editorial staff, the dinner and theatrical invitations, and you are in a fair way of appreciating the real meaning of modern journalism; for what is true of the press agency on a larger scale, is true, in a lesser degree, of the ordinary newspaper."

Such was my daily routine. Many of these columns were written by me and my endeavour was to make what I wrote as useful and as radical as was possible.

The "Words of Wisdom" column consisted of quotations from the world's thinkers and poets. "Wise and Otherwise" was mostly humour. The other titles speak for themselves. At the best, the actual knowledge made known, the wisdom cited, all seemed to be so much of a Professor Tibbits compiling. I hated the work. But I loved Fleet Street. I wandered through it and pondered on its history. I trod the stones that thinkers and writers in the past had trodden. I roved the back-courts. I gleaned the stories connected with them. Fleet Street and its environs became sacred ground and my occupation in it a blasphemy.

My evolution from Boy Preacher to Anarchist lecturer occurred during my years in Fleet Street. Though my evolution was quick it was continuous and I did not so much negate my past as embody it. My reverence was extended, not limited or denied. Interest in Richard Carlile, that brave fighter for the freedom of the press, had been aroused in me by the volumes my grandfather had given me to read. Sacred to the memory of Carlile was Number 1 Bouverie Street, at the junction of Fleet Street. This building, in my time, was the home of the *Sunday Daily News* office. This had been the site of the place where Richard Carlile had lived and died, where he had conducted his immortal struggle for freedom. Here was where the sheriff officers sold off the writings of Thomas Paine in an effort to recover part of the fines imposed on



FLEET STREET, 1902–1907
As the author knew it in the days of the old horse bus

Richard Carlile for publishing those very writings

Richard Carlile's death certificate shows, on the information of his son Alfred who was present at his father's death, that this took place at No 1 Bouverie Street on February 10, 1843

The press announces (March 4, 1956) the closing down of the *Sunset Daily News* It was founded in 1868 I find it hard to recall the number of times I entered the London office of this paper and felt that the ghost of Richard Carlile was walking by my side

The *Daily News* office was in Bouverie Street, a very large building not quite opposite Richard Carlile's old shop The *News* was edited by A G Gardiner He enjoyed a tremendous and, in my opinion, most undeserved reputation as a journalist As *Alpha of the Plough* he wrote a number of mediocre essays and is remembered by his book, *Prophets, Priests, and Kings*

In 1892, when Robert Blatchford published his wonderful penny edition of *Merrie England*, the Clarion Press was located at number 4 Bouverie Street

On the opposite side of Fleet Street, facing Bouverie Street was Chancery Lane During my early Fleet Street days, I would atone for my week day servitude by repairing to an office there where the National Democratic League met The President of the League was W M Thompson, a barrister, who used his talents mostly in defence of the poor He died almost forgotten yet he was a true and loyal man and a genuine servant of the people

Thompson was editor of *Reynolds News paper*, in those days a radical paper with a strong republican flavour, though less strong than it had been when the brothers Reynolds founded it in 1850 That is just after the Carlile and Chartist period Both brothers fought in the Paris Commune One wrote exciting thrillers American blood of today are not a patch on the amazing stories written and published by him I looked forward every Sunday to *Reynolds*, which was taken each week by my grandfather

13 THE "DAILY CHRONICLE"

I don't believe in principle, but oh! I do in interest JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

From the National Press Agency I went to the *Daily Chronicle* in Whitefriars Street I had left the National Press Agency in disgust at the manufactured opinion all over the country for which it was responsible But there was a second reason The National Press Agency took on a young man to train in journalism He had paid £300 for a year's training and during that year he was to receive no wages I was instructed to show him the ropes I had worked my way up as a journalist, receiving wages all the time I regarded this attempt to impose a student journalist upon me as a form of scabbing and refused to do it Had he been training for journalism and receiving wages, I would have given him every help but I was opposed to his paying the Agency for the tuition he wanted These two reasons combined led to my resigning I left with no ill feeling on either side I sustained my objection and that objection was respected I daresay one reason or the other would not have been sufficient good but the combination was too much

The *Daily Chronicle* engaged me as a member of its Editorial Intelligence Department Such departments were then only beginning to be established by the various big dailies The idea had, I believe, originated in the United States Editorial Intelligence work I found to be most interesting and the research involved in such work was a task that suited me Still, I had Socialist vision and the purposes which my intelligence work served did not please me

I had flirted with the idea of joining a law journal but then turned down the opportunity. I enjoyed the study of jurisprudence but disliked the practice of law and the mundane careerism of lawyers When a lawyer possesses talent, he usually abuses his great gift of reason and commonsense, and channels his work to successful bread and butter worthlessness Pursuit of the law usually becomes snobbery and careerism in excelsis This I despised and so ruled it out Thinking it over, I realised that I had no wish to become a legal journalist or a lawyer's stooge So I went

to the *Daily Chronicle* where I met with much exciting political adventure.

Most of this activity and its consequent victimisation came towards the end of my association with Fleet Street and is concerned more with my record as a Social Democrat and Anarchist than with my activity as a journalist.

The *Daily Chronicle* is now incorporated in the *News and Chronicle*. It was founded in 1855 but was later swallowed by the *Daily News* which had started in 1846. Robert Donald is said to have been the *Chronicle's* most famous editor during the period of 1902 to 1918. He was also managing director of United Newspapers, Ltd., until 1918, when the control of the company changed hands. On his retirement from this position Lord Dalziel (then Sir James Dalziel) announced in the House of Commons that Donald had received a total payment of £70,000 on his resignation.

Surely this proves that the man was a money-grubber, not a journalist, in the true sense of the term. As editor when I was on the *Chronicle,* I can testify to the fact that he was a contemptible character.

For his services to Liberalism in the 1906 election, Donald became a knight.

Subsequently Donald became chairman and managing director of Anglo-Foreign Newspapers, Ltd., but he resigned this position in April 1931, owing to *"the amount of time he was obliged to devote to certain public and private interests"*.

Among these interests were membership of various Governmental committees, including that on the Reconstruction of Local Government, and the chairmanship of the British Empire Exhibition in 1924. He was also chairman of the Empire Press Union from 1915 to 1926.

In January 1933, he created a sensation by announcing his appointment as consultative director of Dorland Advertising, Ltd.

One business in which he did retain a life-long interest was the *Municipal Journal* which he founded in 1893. Shortly before his death on February 17, 1933, he acquired *Everyman*.

Sir Robert Donald's career sums up the indictment against Capitalist journalism. His greed, which was his creed! His servile toadyism, which was his Liberalism! There you have Robert Donald and the Fleet Street that I hated. For my refusal to render the services that made for such careerism I was compelled to resign from the *Daily Chronicle* and thus leave Fleet Street for good. For I represented another Fleet Street—the Fleet Street of Richard Carlile!

14. ROBERT BLATCHFORD

The gift of truth is above all other gifts.
—BUDDHIST PROVERB

In dealing with the challenge that the Rev. T. Bedworth Jones declined, I made reference to Robert Blatchford.

The nearest approach to Richard Carlile was a poor shadow of the Carlile tradition.

At number 72 Fleet Street was the Clarion Press founded by Robert Blatchford. He had been a soldier and indeed remained a militarist to the day of his death—a formidable contrast to Richard Carlile, the anti-militarist Republican. After leaving the army, Robert Blatchford became a brushmaker. From the bench he migrated to the *Sunday Chronicle* and attained some reputation as a journalist.

Blatchford while on the *Sunday Chronicle,* insisted on writing an article dealing with the conditions of the poor. The result was that he broke with the *Chronicle* and in company with his brother and A. M. Thompson, founded *The Clarion* with a capital of £400. This was in 1895. Three years later he issued his *Merrie England,* of which one million copies were sold.

At the time I entered Fleet Street, Blatchford was developing some kind of Socialist opinion by his simply written works. He might have succeeded in being a Socialist if he could have forgotten that once he had been a soldier and a militarist. This he could not do and the limitation of his thought thus determined, made him a menace to Socialism and destroyed his worth as a propagandist. For a number of years his pen was a challenge to the soul-suffocating atmosphere of Fleet

Street. But later activities proved that his pen was without real value.

Exactly what good he did it is hard to say. He was responsible, through his *Clarion*, for the conversion of Frances, Countess of Warwick, to Socialism. It would be difficult to decide how far the Countess really sympathised with Socialism, but certainly she was one of the most remarkable women of her time. Born in the lap of luxury, she might have married into the Royal Family. For years she was the most talked-about woman in British Society. She had beauty, vivacity, intelligence. Thus endowed, she was the natural leader of the Smart Set—then known as the "Marlborough House Set". Included in this was the Prince of Wales (Edward VII). She was "feted, feasted, courted and adored".

Her parties were the talk of the time. A huge house-warming party at Warwick Castle was followed by a Fancy Dress Ball. The affair was brilliant and extravagant and the entire press of the country filled their columns with descriptive articles. Only one journal attacked the display—Blatchford's *Clarion*. In it there was a scathing article on the folly of such extravagance while thousands of poor people were living in misery and starvation.

The Countess was furious. She sought an interview with "Nunquam" the writer of the *Clarion* article. This was Blatchford.

The interview took place and "Nunquam" persuaded her to think about Socialism. She studied the subject with the result that the Countess of Warwick declared herself to be a Socialist. As a visitor, she attended the Second International Socialist and Trades Union Congress held in Amsterdam in 1904.

Whether she was a Socialist or not, in the fullest sense of the word, the Countess of Warwick certainly defended the Socialist struggle and in various ways identified herself with this movement. She met Hyndman, Quelch, Burrows and other members of the Social Democratic Federation.

Often when I went to 72 Fleet Street I considered the work Blatchford was attempting. As a result I became acquainted with Hyndman, Quelch and company. But, alas! I did not form the same high opinion of them as that of the Countess. Indeed, I soon saw them as the militarists and enemies of the working-class struggle they proved to be.

W. Martin Haddow used to tell a story of a visit the Countess paid to Glasgow round this time. She was to address a meeting in the St. Andrew's Hall with Keir Hardie, Bruce Glasier, and Bob Smillie. The press and the public were agog with excitement. When the platform party entered there was tumultuous cheering. It was a scene of indescribable enthusiasm. The sceptic might ask what was the result of this enthusiasm. I would tell him, nothing at all.

However, the morning after this meeting, the Countess left for London. As the train was about to leave Haddow, who had chaired the meeting, apologised to her for not allowing her to speak first. He concluded his apology with:

"But the fact is I was afraid the meeting would break up after you had spoken."

When she realised the meaning of Haddow's explanation, her face was wreathed in smiles.

The train disappeared in Queen Street tunnel. Hardie and Glasier collapsed in laughter. *"Oh, Martin,"* said Hardie, *"D'ye ken whit ye said tae that puir woman?"*

In 1902 Blatchford published in the columns of the *Clarion* his famous anti-religious articles, which were collected and published in November 1903 under the title of *God and My Neighbour*.

These articles opened with the challenging direct statement:

"INFIDEL!

"I put the word in capitals because it is my new name and I want to get used to it.

"INFIDEL!"

God and My Neighbour was a great work. It told the young student what to read. It stated Atheism in clear terms. It was uncompromising. It was simple and direct.

On March 4, 1923, in the *Sunday Herald*, Blatchford declared himself a Spiritualist. He must have changed his views somewhat. But he did not recant his Atheism and he lived to be 92. Despite his Spiritualist flight of fancy, Blatchford could have been a truly great man. His support of militarism made greatness impossible.

Although I read the *Clarion*, and was eager to get it the moment it was published, I never sought to become friendly with Blatchford or any of the persons who produced it. Exactly why I cannot explain. I liked the paper and endorsed many of its articles. Yet I felt a barrier. This was not so with the *Agnostic Journal*, another weekly. I came to admire, to read, and finally to write for, the *Agnostic Journal* whilst I was still employed in Fleet Street.

15. SALADIN (W. Stewart Ross)

The religion of one age is the literary entertainment of the next.—EMERSON

Working in Fleet Street and constantly returning home by way of Farringdon Street, it was inevitable that sooner or later I would pass the *Agnostic Journal* office at 41 Farringdon Street. However, before I did pass it by chance, I sought it out and was at once intrigued by the window display. W. Stewart Ross, otherwise *Saladin,* was a tremendous propagandist. Each week, the new *Agnostic Journal* was pasted up in the window and whoso would could read the entire paper without buying a copy.

Saladin was acquainted with Charles Voysey and towards the end of his days was inclined towards a mild Theism. His style of writing was more iconoclastic than that of Voysey but less downright. Voysey wrote directly and simply. He was never ironical. *Saladin* loved irony and was therefore less direct. Of the two, I preferred the simple, direct style of Charles Voysey. Nevertheless, during the greater part of his life. *Saladin* was a bitter opponent of orthodox Christianity. At times he was more mystical than rationalistic.

Except for Charles Voysey, *Saladin* was the only person in the heretical movement who welcomed me to the ranks of heresy. His welcome did not have the warmth of Voysey's but he did welcome me and opened his home to me. Although human enough, *Saladin* was not without conceit. Voysey had no conceit. Utterly devoid of all trace of vanity, Voysey had only purpose. I felt a kinship with Voysey that I felt towards no other. Yet I liked *Saladin* and found his society and conversation stimulating.

The welcome extended to me by *Saladin* was not shared bv his associates. Indeed, they hated me and I felt that thev resented the interest in me *Saladin* showed. One of these was the comedian Freethinker, Ernest Pack. As a punster on the platform, Pack was good. His gibes went home. A good speaker, his only defect was in being without character and purpose. His humour always struck me as being ribald.

Saladin's supporters included Fred Howard, who spoke with Pack. He was a brilliant and effective speaker, he believed in his cause. Yet he turned anti-Socialist. His tragedv was that he knew he was wrong and was always conscious of his treachery. I liked Howard and had sympathy with him. He was a much better person than many of the Labour careerists who despised him. Of this Secular band, Howard was the only one who displayed any liking for me.

As I progressed in the heretical movement, as my heresy turned from theology to politics, as I passed from Radicalism to Socialism, and thence to Anarchism, instead of finding greater welcome, I discovered more and more antagonism and suspicion. Each advance seemed to be disturbing a more close cooperation. Yet I gained nothing, and lost more and more by each advance. Love of truth impelled me onwards. I found that the heretical movements, theological and political, were wanting in genuineness.

When one looks back, one is not surprised at the chaos of the world. That chaos proceeds not merely from the conservative entrenchments of orthodoxy but from the utter rottenness of the revolutionary and progressive movement. I found more love, affection, and understanding expressed towards me by individuals who lived on the border-line of orthodoxy than by those who so loudly proclaimed their heresies. There was a loudness about the proclamation but a very marked tendency to play safe. I write truthfully. I denounce orthodoxy. All my respect is for heresy on the condition that it is sincere. Unless it is sincere, heresy has no claim on either public respect or private affection. It is not heresy but mockery.

The talents of William Stewart Ross, like those of Charles Voysey, were limited. He was a narrow man but he possessed more genius of expression than Voysey. He was less consistent, less truthfullv scholastic, but more certainly a writer with flair and imagination. I admired him immensely.

He wrote his articles in the front shop in Farringdon Road. He loved to pretend to enquirers that he was not Stewart Ross, and from them would accept all sorts of messages which he would assure them he would pass on to *Saladin.* In his office I met that strange person. John Morrison Davidson, who exuded rare but disconnected scholarship. A crony of Stewart Ross, he was a defender of Christ-

ian Socialism and an authority on Winstanley the Digger. He was replete with engaging Radical memories. He was a splendid companion provided you permitted him to do all the talking and applied wisdom later to what he had said. I had a fondness for him but his love of John Barleycorn made too close association impossible. Yet I owe him much.

Saladin made many references to me in his *Agnostic Journal.* In the issue for April 8, 1905, he refers to "Guy A. Aldred, a contributor of high promise". In the issue for October 28, 1905, he made his friendliest reference:

"This Guy, born on Guy Fawkes' Day, and intent on an argumentative blowing up of the Houses of Priestcraft, has done so much at eighteen, that I am sure the readers of the "A.J." would all like to live to see what he will have done by the time he is eighty."

My view of *Saladin* was expressed in a letter he published in the *Agnostic Journal* for April 1905. I wrote:

"As to your writings, well, they are not mere conventional attacks on orthodoxy, but revelations of your own inmost soul, drawing the reader near to the emotional side of Saladin's character, without betraying the writer so as to taint his pen with egotism. But, then, such modesty is common with Scottish writers, who are also thinkers. I trust, then, that you may long continue with us, a living devotionist to Truth, after the manner that Emerson commended in his essay on "Self-Reliance": and an example of intellectual fearlessness, which we young men would do well to imitate. In the past, thou hast indeed, risked all for Truth, and thy reward for such service is the knowledge that, known or unknown, thy service has not been the least helpful in hastening the day when men shall throw off the shackles of a past and pre-historic generation of superstition and ignorance. I rejoice, therefore, with you in your attainment."

This might be worded differently today but this remains my impression of the worth of *Saladin's* writings. He impressed one as a man of character.

Acquaintance with William Stewart Ross was my first association with things Scottish. Ross was born on March 20, 1844. His father was a farm servant, and both his parents were devout Christians of the Presbyterian persuasion. He went to school first at Newabbey, then at Lotus, and afterwards at Hutton Hall. At the age of seventeen, he became master of Glenesslin School, having passed the requisite examination for it; but he resigned at the end of a year on receiving an urgent invitation to Hutton Hall as chief assistant to his old tutor, Mr. Macdonald. Here he met a Miss Sherar, also a teacher, who became his wife.

In this situation Ross had excellent opportunities for study and he cultivated the muses with much assiduity and no small success. Thomas Aird, then editor of the *Dumfries Herald*, recognised his poetical talent, as did also William M'Dowall, editor of the *Standard.* To both newspapers he contributed some spirited and stirring verse. He was awarded a medal offered by Mr. M'Dowall for a poem on Robert Burns, and he also produced a prize poem on the subject of Kossuth at the tomb of Burns.

In his twenty-first year he proceeded to Glasgow University with the purpose of studying for the Church. He was not long there before he found that he could not go forward conscientiously to the ministry. Subsequently, he made what must have seemed to him at the time a successful venture in fiction; and for his manuscript of *Mildred Merlock* he received from Dr. Cameron, of the *Glasgow Weekly Mail,* the sum of forty guineas.

He entered into association with Thomas Laurie of Edinburgh and assisted him in establishing an educational book-house in London. Afterwards Ross embarked in the same line for himself, composing as well as publishing some excellent manuals. His theological heresies brought him into contact with leaders of freethought; and, as editor of the *Agnostic Journal and Eclectic Review,* he was himself to become a leader.

According to the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard,* it was as a writer of occasional verse that he first assumed the pen-name of *Saladin.* For that picturesque prince, with his skill in fence, he cherished a sincere admiration. When he entered the arena of religious polemic, the name became a symbol of his antagonism to the Christian Church.

In 1882, *Saladin* buried his child Bruno in Brookwood Cemetery, Woking. He wrote a beautiful pamphlet describing his feelings as he stood above the grave, entitled *The Valley of the Shadow of Death.* This spoke of the sabre-strokes received in conflict with hostile

fate; of the flowers that smiled up into his eyes when he himself was a child among the Galloway moors; of the light green fronds of the ferns that should contrast with the purple of the heather over his dead child's grave in the "unconsecrated" section of the Woking Necropolis; and of the lack of dreadfulness of death itself. The dread sprang from standing above ground and allowing the mind to speculate upon the prospect of lying below ground.

Man's little life was not worth eternal prolongation. All that needed to be preserved was the memory of some little kindness done to the weak and helpless, some little straw removed from the burden of ignorance which bent down the head and shoulders of Humanity.

No bitter and agonised remonstrance of man could arrest winter with its biting frost, or keep back summer with its swelter-noon, and no shriek of mortal suffering could blunt the edges of the scythe of Death. Nature, although inexorable in her legislation, was merciful in her executive. She did not exterminate the race with accumulated misery. If on the one hand she carried the chalice of agony, in the other she bore the nepenthe of time and the anodyne of death. When suffering became unbearable, she took man to her cold but kindly bosom, and allayed the fever of his reeling brain by filling his skull with the calm and throbless mould of the tomb.

I must confess that, in this mysticism with which *Saladin* often plagued me, I saw neither rhyme nor reason. To me, it was words meaning nothing and merely averred that death ended all. He wrote almost religiously:

"I look forward to mercy and solace. I am a link in the universal chain. Nature will not medicate to the rent side of the mountain, and find no balm in her mighty Gilead for the agonised heart of Man!"

On this subject, *Saladin* always wrote grandly and beautifully. Thus in his *Roses and Rue* he penned the following lines of what Poe would term pleasurable sadness:

Draw the bolts, undo the bars,
And let me go;
'Mong lilies kissed by dreamy stars
Lay me low;
For here I'd rest my aching head,
Here end my life-long woe;
Ye myrtles o'er the holy dead,
I'm weary — let me go.

* * * * *

And I bequeath my rusting sword,
And withered wreath of song;
To kingly Truth my only lord,
And my hate of ruthless Wrong;
I see them wending through the gloom,
The hearse-plumes, sad and slow;
I hear the welcome of the tomb;
I'm weary — lay me low.

For dearer far than all your fame,
And all your laurels now,
Would be the ragweed's flowers of flame,
And the death-damp on my brow,
For I've been on life's reeling wave,
Its ebb and doleful flow;
I've tried all mortal but the grave;
I'm weary — let me go.

* * * * *

The winding-sheet's the saintliest gown,
With its folds of stainless snow;
And sweet is the sleep in the dim, dumb town,
That lies so cold and low.
They've gone before from the False to the Real,
All those whom I cared to know,
And I'd join them again in the Land o' the Leal:
I'm weary — let me go.

Draw the bolts, undo the bars,
And let me go;
'Mong lilies kissed by dreamy stars,
Lay me low;
For here I'd rest my aching head,
Here end my life-long woe;
Ye myrtles o'er the holy dead,
I'm weary — let me go.

* * * * *

The fadeless amaranth is dead,
The daisy's eye is blind,
The ravished white rose and the red,
Wail in the winter wind.
And pants and longs my yearning soul,
With hectic throb and throe;
I hear the eternal tocsin toll,
I'm weary — let me go.

I recalled these lines, when on November 30, 1906, the author died; and again, six days later, when we laid him to rest in the grave that contained the remains of his child.

The passing of *Saladin* received very little

notice in the ordinary press. *Reynolds Newspaper,* in its issue for December 9, 1906, devoted a few lines to the funeral:

"BURIAL OF 'SALADIN'

"On Thursday a little band of relatives and personal friends attended at Woking Cemetery to pay the last tribute of love and respect to him who, for thirty years, over the pseudonym 'Saladin' conducted the 'Agnostic Herald and Eclectic Review'.

"An appropriate address was given by Mr. Ernest Pack, and Mr. Guy Aldred spoke remarkably well and to the point, after which Mr. Foote also spoke."

Ernest Pack, no longer jocular, recalled *Saladin's* graphic picture of *The City of the Dead.*

Quoting from Bryant's minor poem, *June,* Poe writes of the certain taint of sadness which is connected inseparably with all the higher manifestations of true beauty. In the lines reproduced from *Saladin* that taint of sadness is apparent as in the beautiful poem of Bryant, or the wonderful verse of Fitzgerald-Omar, which bids us turn down an empty glass.

Saladin's last published work was *The Book of "At Random".* He presented me with one of the very first copies issued. duly inscribed. It went astray during my first imprisonment. This book contained some of the finest passages *Saladin* wrote for the *Agnostic Journal.* It included his death tributes to Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, which were indeed "eloquent funeral orations, with solemn anthems, set to the music of muffled drums". In the same work he invoked the spirit of Hypatia:

"Hypatia, my soul, over the gulf of the centuries yearns for you with

"'The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow.'

"You stood at the beginning of the Dark Ages; I, near their close. Sweet girl, over the deeps of the mystic abyss, this night, your hand lies in mine. I hold it with the pulsing grasp of an impassioned love; your soul has never left this world. I feel that you work incessantly with me, and with all those, who, like you, would die for Truth. The years are now falling on me heavily. Ere long, I shall join you—You from the beginning of the Dark Ages, I from the end; and you, washed from the blood-stains, white, pure, divine; I shall league with you, sainted martyr maiden, to see that the Dark Ages blight this planet, the earth, no more for ever. The unity of Purpose overleaps the abyss of Time:

"'And when the sunset gates unbar
Shall I not see thee waiting stand?
And, white against the evening star,
The welcome of thy beckoning hand?'
—WHITTIER"

Saladin had a great regard for Whittier and would never tire of quoting him.

The old Agnostic chief was not a scholar and claimed no place as a scholar. He was a commentator and an iconoclast. He had the gift of writing, rather as a mystic, and sometimes as a poet, than as a strict man of learning. His pen was not gentle always. It could flay and prove vitriolic. There was style in the man. That style made him a power. He had personality and dourness.

The irascibility which was a feature of *Saladin* made him obviously a Scot for only a Scot could have displayed the anger he did at simple incidents.

William Ewart Gladstone was said to have three different scripts: one that both he and his secretary could understand; a second that only God and Gladstone could understand; and a third, that only God could understand. *Saladin's* writing was something in the third category.

Saladin had written a leading article on Palm Sunday. One sentence began: "Palm Sunday . . ." When the proof came along. he discovered that, instead of "Palm Sunday", the compositor had set it up as "Sam Lundy". In a fury of rage *Saladin* corrected the proof and wrote in the margin: *"Palm Sunday, not Sam Lundy, you idiot. Who the devil is Sam Lundy?"*

And when the essay appeared in print it read: *"Sam Lundy. Palm Sunday, not Sam Lundy, you idiot. Who the devil is Sam Lundy?"*

Thus to the reader was revealed the temper of *Saladin* and the ignorance of the typesetter.

A few weeks before *Saladin's* death, I stood by his bedside, at his house in Canterbury Road, Brixton, and found him keen and alert. Up to the very last he fought for truth as only a soldier of freethought could. Vigorously did he denounce all that hindered social progress. Although his own mind could see little beyond the war on clericalism, willingly did he open his columns to those who were fighting for

human emancipation from the thraldom of Church and State. He was helpful and never hindered the development of one's mind. Association with him made for growth and freedom. I recall his mysticism and irreverence, his keen incisive prose, and now thunderous, now tender verse.

In one of his last "At Random" editorials for the *Agnostic Journal*, written on his death-bed, *Saladin* permitted both strains to develop. Describing the world as a failure, he wrote:

"Man never can be happy, and never can have a deity worth his salt till we have got something in the way of philadelphia, of universal brotherhood. We can never make much of this world while the deep and hideous gulf yawns between the Smart Set and the Hungry Hooligan. This is, to me, indisputable. Man never will — melancholy forecast! — be aught above what he is and has been, till he is raised to the dignity of the other animals, till, like them, he has not to toil in order to exist. All-Power could have so elevated him. All-Benevolence would have so elevated him. It is not by his compulsory toil, but by our so wisely-used leisure, that man has ever risen in the scale of being. It is not from his toil that he might exist, that man has ever been elevated, but by his spontaneous work in which his hand was strenuous and deft, and in which his soul delighted. If a man could only get as much leisure as does a cow, he would, in a few generations, be more than man; he would scale the heavens, and, not like those who built on the plain of Shinar, perish in the attempt. But, till the apparently unalterable laws of the universe are altered, he will be degraded and miserable, while, like a dirty 'gamin', he has to scramble in the gutter for bread. He who has to engage in such a scramble is hopelessly handicapped. Rolling the stone of Sisyphus is nothing to the task set before the huge majority of the human race, an all-absorbing engagement in placing pabulum at one end of the alimentary canal, only that it may come out at the other. And, O God of our fathers, tried by the touchstone of experience, this is 'the chief end of man!'

"The world, today, is a failure. What is the wonder that this is so: it has faked-up and poisonous food for both soul and body. Its soul-food is a bookful of imbecile and noxious lies. Its body-food consists, to a great extent, of faked-up abominations. They are not by any means peculiar to Chicago and foreign centres of tinned horrors."

Saladin proceeded to quote an official report on the terrible conditions prevailing in a London factory. He commented:

"So much for the food of the body; and, as for the food of the soul, it has come to be regarded as so repugnant and poisonous that it has to be rammed down our throats by all kinds of Salvation Army drums and vulgarities, and Evan Roberts paroxysms of howling insanity."

Illustrative of this complaint, and as a specimen of the modern method of preaching religion, *Saladin* reproduced the following handbill issued by the Thornhill Methodist Free Church, Sunderland:

JESUS AND COMPANY, LIMITED
INVESTMENTS RECEIVED RIGHT UP TO THE POINT OF DEATH
PERIODICAL STATEMENT

Objects: This Company was formed two thousand years ago for the purpose of reclaiming the fallen; giving sight to the blind; clothing the naked; restoring the lost and strayed; comforting the sorrowing; and casting sin out of the world.

Prospectus: The Company has at its disposal a large and varied plant; it is under the immediate control of Jesus, the originator of the Company, whose entire capital (his life) is invested in the concern.

Dividend: The Company offers a safe and sound investment to every intending shareholder. The dividend is on the partition principle, and is both immediate and deferred. The immediate dividend consists of concurrent rewards; earthly peace and earthly happiness. The deferred dividend consists of heavenly mansions, crowns of glory, and garments washed in the blood of the lamb.

The company not only insures its members against all risks, but lays up for them an 'eternal weight of glory'. The offices are open night and day, and investments received right up to the point of death.

Chairman: The Almighty Himself
Manager: The Lord Jesus
Secretary: The Holy Spirit and Comforter
Head Offices: Beulah Land
Branch Offices: Thornhill Church
Men's Cheerful Meeting, and 'Wherever two or three are gathered together'

Incidental: The Company's crest is a Cross, surmounted by a Crown, and its motto, 'Whosoever will may come'.
Precautionary: Should any difficulty be felt by intending investors, the Holy Spirit will wait upon him or her in their own homes, and their names immediately be written in the 'Lamb's Book of Life'.

Issued by Thornhill Men's Cheerful Meeting Leader, Mr. Geo. Taylor. Pastor, Rev. J. Ninnis
Every Sunday, 2.30 to 3.30

This leaflet deserves to be preserved as an imperishable example of orthodox vulgarity and blasphemy.

Compare its terms with the passage below taken from an essay by *Saladin* penned on his death-bed:

"I am called an iconoclast, and it is possible I am not guiltless of irreverence of a kind. But I certainly should shrink from raffling for Bibles on the Communion Table; and, chronically hard up as I am for bawbees, I should shudder to fire a bullet into the old Book and then stick it in my window to attract gulls to come and buy tobacco or boots or herring. The Book, although I no longer believe in its special inspiration, although it is no longer divine, is, to me, profoundly and sacredly human—was venerated by those who gave me birth—was loved by those who loved me as I shall never be loved again. Whatever I might do for its own sake, for theirs it pains me to profane it. I am a bad singer, but I have tried my best on the following lines, by poor Hugh Kerr, 'The Bard of Annickvale'; and, if the music was wrong, I know that the feeling was right:

The wee claspin' Bible, my mither's wee Bible,
My ain faither bocht when he made her his bride,
An' when she gaed frae me she handit it tae me,
An' hop'd I would study to make it my guide.
The auld chair she sat on, an' mony times grat on,
When thochts o' the deid brocht the tear tae her e'e,
An' a' roun' the dwallin' dear, dear tae a callan',
Thou wee claspin' Bible was present wi' thee.

This wee claspin' Bible, this tear-drappit Bible,
I've borne at her side at the kirk wi' the lave;
An' often she sauntert until the kirk entert,
An' mournfully gazed on my faither's green grave.
The voice sweet and calm aye, I heard in the Psalm aye,
It comes like the tone o' a speerit sair vex'd,
An' still see her lean wi' her hauns on her een,
An' the streak o' spearmint slippit in at the text.

"It was out of the Bible I learnt to read, and my teacher was my mother. To those who are constructed as I am I need say no more. My head rejects the Book, but my heart never. In regard to it, I give to Truth all I can spare from Sentiment. If in some home by the Solway, I were pointed out the poor old deal cradle in which I was rocked, because I can now do without it, because it is now old and useless and worm-eaten and ugly, could I employ my virile strength in breaking it up and casting it upon the fire? Nay, verily. Man's mature life is rounded and balanced by all the stages of his past development. He is a hard and unsentimental traveller, who, because he has arrived near his journey's end, forgets the early milestones, in passing which his childhood hunted butterflies, or gathered flowers, or shed tears for a baby sister taken away from amid the daisies and laid in the tomb. We can be religious without the old Book; but when we become callous of tender emotion, or filial love, to early and innocent memories, we shall be irreligious indeed."

It is to *Saladin*, and his rapier-like pen, that I owe the fact that I discarded the world of dogma for that of reality. I descended from the realm of metaphysic to that of physical actuality. I passed from deductive utopianism to inductive conclusion. I sought no longer to explain the world. I decided to set about changing it. And I aimed to change it far beyond any concept that had moved *Saladin* in his agnosticism.

No Traitor's Gait! Number 5 includes chapters on J. Morrison Davidson, Social Democracy, H. M. Hyndman, Unitarianism, Socialism and Religion, and Ramsay MacDonald.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE STRICKLAND PRESS, GLASGOW

TELEPHONE No 1015, HOLBORN.
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS, "TYPO, LONDON"

National Press Agency
LIMITED

LITERARY DEPARTMENT

Whitefriars House,
Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.

Jan. 18th, 1907

Messrs. Butterworth & Co.

Gentlemen,

Mr. Guy Aldred, who was for two and a half years on the staff of the National Press Agency, informs me that he is applying for a Subeditorship on a Law journal of which you have control. I am glad to be able to say that while he was with us he showed more than ordinary ability, and was bright and painstaking. Some original work which he did also proved that he had read extensively.

Yours faithfully,

W. N. Shansfield

Editor.

TELEPHONE No 1015, HOLBORN
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS, "TYPO, LONDON"

National Press Agency
LIMITED

LITERARY DEPARTMENT

Whitefriars House,
Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.

18th Jan.y 1907

Messrs Butterworth & Co.

Gents

I understand that the bearer of this - Mr Guy Aldred - is applying to you for a subeditorial position. I have much pleasure in saying that during the two or three years he was in my department - up to March last year - he showed considerable ability and the possession of an unusually wide range of all round knowledge, whilst his character was all that could be desired. I trust he will be successful in his undertakings.

I am Gentlemen,

Faithfully yours

Ernest Playford.

CONTENTS

PART IV. SCOTS INTERLUDE

1. Nationalist Ineptitude
page 97

2. "Saladin" and Davidson
page 99

3. Sweetheart Abbey
page 100

4. Annie Laurie
page 102

5. Robert Burns
page 103

6. Newton Stewart
page 104

7. Scots Dictionary
page 105

8. Paul Jones
page 106

9. John Morrison Davidson—The Man
page 107

PART V. WITH THE PARLIAMENTARIANS

1. Social Democracy
page 111

2. Jack Williams
page 113

3. "Justice" and Religion
page 116

4. W. S. Cluse
page 118

5. I Become a Non-Parliamentarian
page 119

ILLUSTRATIONS

"Saladin" (W. Stewart Ross)
page 108

John Morrison Davidson
page 108

H. M. Hyndman
page 112

Jack Williams
page 114

PART IV. SCOTS INTERLUDE

1. NATIONALIST INEPTITUDE

There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough-hew them how we may.

—SHAKESPEARE

When I sought out the *Agnostic Journal* office in Farringdon Street under the Holborn Arches, and bearded *Saladin* in his den, I never thought that destiny would treat me to a Scots digression. Destiny did and so I made contact with John Morrison Davidson.

Despite his Anarchism, John Morrison Davidson gloried in the traditions and folk-lore of lowland Scotland. At that time I had not crossed the border. I had been cured of my Clerkenwell provincialism but I felt no great desire to wander far from Clerkenwell. Indeed, I loved the history of Clerkenwell. It was my fairy-land of rebellion and mental revolt. Its very environment was an education in itself. My feeling for Clerkenwell was like that of Mrs. John Burns for Battersea only with more reason: for Cierkenwell had not only a history, but that history was one of thought and of proletarian struggle.

In 1905, when John Burns became a Cabinet Minister a lady of title wrote from Mayfair to his wife inviting her to tea. My lady explained that she would have visited Mrs. Burns at Battersea but that the distance from Mayfair to Battersea was so great, etc. Mrs. Burns, rightly so, declined the invitation on the ground that *"the distance from Battersea to Mayfair is just as great as the distance from Mayfair to Battersea"*.

That reply put the grand lady in her place and in plain terms rebuked her snobbery. Clerkenwell satisfied me and I had never any wish to visit the land of the Gael or anywhere else. I always travelled, although I have wandered round Britain quite a lot as a propagandist, with reluctance. When I really get on the move I migrate rather than travel. I am the complete villager. I am surprised at the people who find adventure when they go to the United States, Canada, or Australia. They merely leave one village, one small street, for another. Somehow they consider this adventure. That is not my view and never has been. I have migrated but not happily and I have travelled but found that it ended in migration. I am a citizen of the world in spirit and in feeling. I know no alien for I count all men my comrades and brothers. Geographically, I remain the villager. I deem that the natural fate of nearly all people. We are villagers from the day of our birth to the day of our death. Some, a very few, have a small interest in maybe two or three villages, instead of remaining completely loyal to one. They are polygamous in their village attachments and usually they find this kind of polygamy as awkward at times as others do the polygamy of mating.

Morrison Davidson insisted on my mind roving the glens of Scotland. He imposed his strong patriotic provincialism on me in the heart of London, not a stone's throw from Fleet Street, and about the same distance from the Cockney tenement in which I had been born. Within the very shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral, he insisted that I tour Galloway in spirit with him. To him this was grand history, almost a marvellous revelation of the cosmos. To me it was a quaint expression of a very narrow nationalism. It was so simple, so natural, this Scots bombardment of my mind, that I smiled. The reason for my smiling I kept to myself. I visited the *Agnostic Journal* office every day, to sit at the feet of *Saladin*. There, at least three times a week, I saw Morrison Davidson. His assault on me was continuous and lasted for nearly two years. *Saladin* ably assisted him in the conspiracy.

Some of the lore and history to which I was introduced by Morrison Davidson I record here. It could be considered an interlude in my mental development. This Scots interlude contributed to my political education. When the time came and I crossed the border my memory of it enabled me to estimate the value of Scottish Nationalism as a political factor and to come to grips with certain

phases of Labourism and political careerism. For this reason, and for flashes of inspiration Morrison Davidson's story possessed that even he did not sense, I pause to describe this Scots diversion. As my story approaches the period when I tried to give form to my anti-parliamentarian understanding, the importance of this narration will be understood. John Morrison Davidson, not knowing that it was so, was part of the divinity that shaped my end. His influence was not obvious at the time. Our association was most casual although so frequent. It did not yield fruit until years later. As my attitude towards the question of mating grew, and my interest in old Scots law as distinct from English was roused, my association became a matter of much importance. It was another step in my strange mental maturing and was destined to make me attempt to stage some protest against the dull routine of convention. It was fitting me for a certain achievement and expression of my life's purpose.

It may be that, in the end, like the chrysalis in the *Insect Play,* all this seeming-to-become will prove to be only a seeming. There will be no real achievement. Lessons may be taught, even then, by the fact of my failure. The development can be studied and the effect of surrounding circumstance considered. Even failure merits enquiry.

Each time I entered the *Agnostic Journal* office, I found myself miles away from the busy thoroughfare outside. The office was prosaic enough, with its stock of anti-Christian pamphlets. *Saladin* was quiet enough, seated at the counter writing, with all the appearance of some silent god of antiquity. Then Morrison Davidson would enter and the drab room became a very world of emotional trance and romance. It was not that Morrison Davidson was in himself a romantic being. He was not; but around him of his own creation was a Scots halo. I became the centre of a veritable transformation scene. Time and circumstance lost all meaning. Away we departed for the lowlands of Scotland on a weird time machine—enchantment all the way.

Utopia that proscribes all possibility of error is a dream that I do not believe will come true. The map will not compare with the reality. It will have to be redrawn. Still, the social explorer must sail uncharted seas. Somewhere, the land of promise must be found. All this belongs to the future even whilst we work for it to become the present. Here is struggle and adventure, a creativeness that calls for enthusiasm, energy, and joyous excitement. With the past it is not so.

Outside of archaeology, which examines and reconstructs and enthrals, there is no living past. What has been is no holy land. Often it is but a record of kings and queens and statesmen and no study of the lives and hopes and fears of the common people. I do not like the past with its sordid wrongs, unless it is the story of some common person's struggle against such wrongs. Mostly it is a eulogy of those who merit no praise. I do not like the past. And I do not like the stupid hypocrisy which passes muster for Scottish nationalism. Study has shown me that its good has perished and that it has become a mincing parade of cunning folly and social stupidity. It lacks sincerity. On this account, the Scot has departed from it. The name has been attached as an adjective to weird hypocrisy.

My *Agnostic Journal* discussions with John Morrison Davidson, in which I was mostly the listener, taught me that Scottish Nationalism had little in common with Irish Nationalism. Irish Nationalism had character and a real social-economic worth and purpose, although the purpose was not dynamic enough. Irish Nationalism was courageous. It also dealt with the present and the future and finally merged into the Socialist struggle. Scottish Nationalism is a cowardly political activity. It loses itself in the past and has neither backbone nor purpose. Its final goal is an intellectual and political life for a ruling caste in Edinburgh.

Morrison Davidson did not see all this. As regards words, he urged nationalism in a rugged fashion. The words were merely trimmings to his soul and had no vital meaning. They emptied his life of any radicalism it might have possessed.

When at last I went to Scotland, and became a citizen of Glasgow, the lesson of the talks with Morrison Davidson took form in my mind. I was able to differentiate between the genuine Scots spirit and the bogus pretentious Scots Nationalism.

2. SALADIN AND DAVIDSON

A consistent man believes in destiny, a capricious man in chance.

—BENJAMIN DISRAELI

When I met John Morrison Davidson, I was an Atheist and believed in my revolutionary destiny. He was a Theist and believed in chance. I have noticed this often about the various folk with whom I have made contact during the years: a fundamental contradiction in their belief. A Theist ought to believe in destiny. He never does: for, if he did, he would not pray so violently and so consistently. Even God cannot cause the cup to pass from his lips. The Atheist is supposed to believe in chance. Constantly he faces the challenge: *"Do you believe all this came by chance?"* It would be better to be able to believe it all came by chance. If the world, and all of it that has passed into history, came by design, then the designer must be a murderer and a dictator and a being of evil will and intention. No good God could have designed the world in which man lives: or the lower animals either, for that matter. The designer planned badly and was evil.

Putting aside the question of God, I, as an Atheist, did not believe in chance. I believed that one event followed after another: that events combined as they followed and caused further events. I accepted destiny as a fact and was compelled to give expression consistently with its trend, even when I knew where it emerged or what it threatened. I did subscribe to the realism of my destiny. On that account I have been uncompromising in my conduct and unswerving in my purpose. I saw in John Morrison Davidson a contributor to my destiny. Association with him taught me many lessons. Without knowing it he was one of my schoolmasters. And I am attending school still. My graduation is still to come. And that graduation cannot be achieved until the social revolution has swept through Britain and wiped out political and religious careerism and our social hypocrisies. Morrison Davidson might be shocked could he realise the thoroughness with which I noted the lessons he taught me.

John Morrison Davidson was born at Fetterangus, in the parish of Old Deer, Buchan, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, on July 31, 1843. Richard Carlile had been dead about six-and-a-half months at the time of Davidson's birth. The two years during which he played the part of my unknowing tutor he spent, in his work of teaching, no distance from the spot where Richard Carlile had lived, struggled, and died. Yet Morrison Davidson had little time for the story of Richard Carlile because all his interest was north of the Border and in the great long ago. When *Saladin* gossipped with me one day about Davidson's large family the thought struck me that Davidson would have been better employed studying birth control than ancient Scots history.

Theologically, *Saladin* and John Morrison Davidson were poles apart, notwithstanding occasional agreement. *Saladin* spoke with a blasphemous fervour which at times annoyed me and even shocked me. There was nothing actually coarse in what he said. His language was not obscene. Never in all the time I was associated with him, did I hear him utter an unclean word or thought. His whole nature was beyond such vulgarity. Blasphemy is, of course, an impossible offence. Yet there was something in the irony of his speech, and the sardonic character of his approach to religious discussion, that often jarred me. On the other hand, he possessed a strange mysticism of understanding that also read romance into the universe and gave soul and body to ghosts and devils, in a way that pleased the orthodox but offended my natural logic. There is no mysticism in the universe and romance comes from within one's-self; is purely subjective, not objective.

To *Saladin* Jesus did not exist. Yet his existence was not denied. He played with the idea of Jesus and accepted wisdom and miracles with the same happy playfulness. To me, Jesus was a reality, a man, as historic as Caesar, and spoken of sometimes truly—sometimes falsely. Through the mists I desired to know and to see the true person. *Saladin's* argumentative sword-play, caring nought for the truth of the matter, offended my thirst for clear understanding.

Romantic uncertainty about a future life was no less offensive. To *Saladin* this avowed doubtfulness was a sort of spiritual beauty, a playing at vision. To me, it was sheer non-

sense and not entirely without intellectual dishonesty.

Morrison Davidson, devoted to John Barleycorn, and nearly always speaking in his cups, represented another problem. Jesus did exist *as a man* for Davidson. His failing was a desire to placate orthodoxy by a strategic approach which was totally devoid of strategy. He did not believe in the divinity of Jesus yet he would use a capital initial letter for his pronoun when referring to Jesus. Recently, the Soviet Union has coined the phrase "the cult of personality", which describes this type of approach. It was as though Morrison Davidson half-believed in the divine nature of Jesus. At least, *Saladin* employed the small letter for the pronouns.

Like *Saladin,* Davidson would not define his Jesus. Nor would he rescue him from the miracle appendages. He swallowed Jesus, miracles and all, and left one gasping at his contemplation of a miracle worker. To my mind, this robbed Jesus of all personality and made his existence doubtful. Despite his knowledge Davidson did not have the wit to understand this fact. This argued, to my understanding, a want of intellectual honesty. It gave one a feeling of ugliness.

Davidson seemed more religious than *Saladin.* Yet I would say that his conversation and manner were more coarse. *Saladin* possessed more spirituality and had a finer thread running through his character.

Their want of forthrightness in relation to religion defines an attitude of mind which has enabled divines to play at higher criticism and to receive advancement whilst being heretics. Such an attitude has earned respect for Freethinkers who, in consequence, have been regarded as quite respectable and just on the verge of righteousness. I have no time for such burlesque behaviour.

It was the provincialism of *Saladin* and Morrison Davidson that opened up a new world to me. I was transported across the border long before I travelled across it physically and even before the idea of the border had any real meaning for me. Geography is better understood by experience than by map-reading.

In regard to Scotland they were cronies. Morrison Davidson literally button-holed any Sassenach he could conscript into listening. *Saladin* ably seconded all Davidson said. Strong Lowland patriots, I doubted their real interest in Scotland. They were moved by pure myth, pure poetry. Scots Nationalism is an amazing political phenomenon, as I was to discover. It had a vast political and moral material upon which to work. And it casts all aside for the sake of toadyism to England. Scots politicians, particularly the Labourists, have proven to be a pack of political scoundrels who have thrown away a tremendous moral and social birthright for a mess of careerist pottage.

3. SWEETHEART ABBEY

A widowed bird sate mourning
Upon a wintry bough.

—SHELLEY

Morrison Davidson was nothing without his heavy walking-stick. Sitting in the *Agnostic Journal* office, usually on the public side of the counter, whilst *Saladin* sat on the other side for all the world as though he were anxiously awaiting customers, Davidson would put his stick between his legs and leaning forward, place his chin over his hands which grasped the handle. Outside he could stand for hours bent forward, the stick taking his weight. Thus positioned in comfort, on he would go without end about the beauties of the lowlands of Scotland. Much of what he said in conversation with me I could dismiss at once but a part of his talk must have sunk deep in my mind. At a later date, when I became associated with the 12th Duke of Bedford and visited his place at Newton Stewart, Davidson's descriptions and his talk came back to me. Then I appreciated its interest and value.

On one occasion, standing amidst the roar and bustle of Fleet Street, Davidson related to me the the tale of Dervorguilla, the mother of John Baliol. Dervorguilla carried with her everywhere and always in a silver casket, the heart of her dead husband. To his memory, she built Sweetheart Abbey. As he described this to me Morrison Davidson's voice assumed the tone of an affectionate lover telling

with awe the tale of a still-living woman. He described the Abbey almost insisting on the necessity of my making a pilgrimage to it in order to pay my tribute of respect to the memory of the faithful Dervorguilla.

This tale was told more than once. I came to smile as Davidson would start the story of Sweetheart Abbey. The name appealed to me but I had never a notion of paying a visit to the abbey near Dumfries. An ever-present embalmed heart was too materialistic, too maudlin, and too false, to rouse my respect. I shuddered at such a conceit as a heavy concentrated sadness, being termed love or linked with the tender word "sweetheart". Also I revolted economically. What Dervorguilla did, being a fine lady, the poor could not do however great their sorrow. Morrison Davidson could not understand my horror. Yet he was a radical of a sort, a humanist Christian who termed himself an Anarchist. He wrote some radical comments on contemporary life yet lost himself in the mists of this weird nationalism. I may not have respected the tale of Dervorguilla as Davidson would have liked but certainly his strange historical reaction developed my Socialism.

Although they had no place in my political outlook, Robert Bruce I understood as I did likewise the Old Chevalier and Bonnie Prince Charlie. Galloway hated the first and refused allegiance to the other two. Galloway dived further back into history for its heroes. These ancient tales stirred Morrison Davidson profoundly but they left me cold.

Davidson talked of the stormy days of King Alan and John Baliol as if they were contemporary records. I was more concerned with the consequences of the Boer War and the current world situation. He rejoiced—strangely for an alleged Pacifist, I thought, at the fact or fiction that Galloway men always formed the van in battle. Alas! for the departed glories of Scotland, he told me of a king of Galloway who threatened the king of Norway with a navy. But navies did not enthral me and I had no love for the sailor who was not a merchant sailor.

Again and again, he would bring in the story of Dervorguilla. Her sorrow, he told me, was one of Scotland's few happy love tales, but I could see no happiness in the narrative. Only its conclusion, "Sweetheart Abbey" delighted me. I just liked the name.

Saladin would listen with apparent pleasure to Davidson's recitals. Solemnly he acquiesced. Their immediate surroundings did not exist. Together they lived in the days of old. Together they paid tribute to the love of Dervorguilla. All this was somewhat unhealthy to my mind; but I am sure they felt that they were Scots in exile.

From what Davidson told me, I believe that in the chapel of Balliol College, on stated Sundays the "bidding prayer" is recited: "We thank God for John Baliol and Dervorguilla."

Dervorguilla is the real founder of Balliol College, Oxford. On the college shield, above the great gate of the college, in the "Broad", is the crowned lion of Galloway impaled with the Orle of Balliol.

Another Oxford College, Oriel, Davidson explained to me, is linked with Scotland in a rather perverse fashion. After Bannockburn, Edward II was captured by a band of Scottish knights. On escaping, he vowed if he got away safely, that he would found a house for poor Carmelites. He fulfilled his vow. In due course, that house became Oriel College.

Dervorguilla endeavoured to enshrine her love by building the most beautiful abbey on the borders. The abbey was known as Dulcecor or Doux-quer—Sweetheart Abbey.

Somewhere near the high altar she is buried with the embalmed heart of her husband, John Baliol. Born about 1210 at Kenmure in Galloway, a ruined castle marks the site of the stronghold of her father, Alan, last of the Lords of Galloway. He was one of the greatest nobles of his day in Britain. His daughter was one of the richest women of her time. She inherited estates in Huntingdon, Bedford, and Northamption. At twenty years of age, she married John de Baliol, an English baron, whose seat was at Barnard Castle, Durham. He had estates in Northumberland and Hertfordshire. Galloway was their favourite residence. In the castle of Baittle, near Dalbeattie, she bore the son who became John Baliol, King of Scotland. During the twenty-one years that she survived her husband, his embalmed heart in the silver casket, never left her side.

A love story, true! I wondered, as Davidson dwelt on this tale, how it helped the struggle of the common people. Did his dwelling on it not unfit him for playing any real part in that struggle?

4. ANNIE LAURIE

For the nineteenth century has produced these men—men who bowed at no shrine, acknowledged no God, believed in no hereafter, and yet went as proudly and triumphantly to the gallows as ever did Christian martyr of old.

—VOLTAIRINE DE CLEYRE, *on the Chicago Anarchists, November 1895.*

Another day, the Scots patriotism of John Morrison Davidson impelled him to tell me the story of Annie Laurie. This moved me, not because of the story itself. At this time I had learned the history of the Chicago Martyrs, and had been especially moved by the stand of Albert Parsons. I cannot think of *Annie Laurie* or listen to its melancholy air without seeming to hear clearly the powerfully sweet voice of Albert Parsons as it filled the gloomy corridors of Cook County Jail on his last night on earth. This was the tender love song he sang and this refrain echoes the memory of his courage throughout the world. A short time before he was executed he was asked to petition to save his life. This would have won him not only life but freedom. Albert Parsons was innocent even of association with the event that was framed against him and his comrades. Physically, it was impossible to connect him with the bomb now known to have been thrown by a police agent. Parsons refused to petition. He declined to desert his comrades by suing for his life at the feet of the State. And his defiance rang out to the world as he sang of Annie Laurie.

Parsons was hanged, with Adolf Fischer, George Engel, and August Spies, on November 11, 1887. And so I deem *Annie Laurie* a sacred battle hymn.

Such were my feelings when Morrison Davidson told me of Annie Laurie—a story that is not really worthy of the great Chicago prison setting. The Red Chicago record was fresh in my mind, as was also the noble action of Governor Altgeld, when he sacrificed his career, by fully exonerating the executed Anarchists, and then releasing from prison completely pardoned the three remaining victims of the famous trial. Altgeld indicted the prosecution in flaming terms that will never die.

My deep respect for Altgeld, my love for the memory of Parsons, were stimulated as the story of Annie Laurie was unfolded to me by Morrison Davidson.

Annie Laurie is regarded as one of the most famous personal love stories of the world. Annie Laurie was the daughter of Sir Robert Laurie. The poem was penned to her by a young soldier, William Douglas, of Fingland, a scion of the Douglases of Morton Castle. Douglas retired from the Army in 1694, settled in Fingland, and fell in love with Annie Laurie.

Annie did not object to Douglas as a lover. Her parents did. They locked her in her room until she promised to give up Douglas. She did so. Douglas then eloped with Elizabeth Clark of Glendoich, Lanark, and Annie Laurie married Alexander Fergusson, of Craigdarroch. These were the lovers whose deathless passion had excited interest wherever the song was sung.

The quality of the song, and its immortal worth is not due to Douglas. Lady John Scott rewrote it and set it to music. She improved the original text. Annie Laurie was given a brow like "the snadrift" and a throat like "the swan". The "rolling eye" that was described by Douglas became a "dark blue". Thus did Lady John Scott temper the picture for posterity. William Douglas wrote more heartily and more naturally:

She's backit like a peacock,
She's breastit like a swan,
She's jimp about the middle,
Her waist ye weill may span,
Her waist ye weill may span,
And she has a rolling eye,
And for bonnie Annie Laurie,
I'd lay down my head and die.

5. ROBERT BURNS

Dear Bard and Brother! let those who may
Against thy faults be railing,
(Though far, I pray from us, be they
That never had a failing!)
One boast I'll give, and that not long
Which thou would pledge if present—
To him whose song, in nature strong
Makes man of prince and peasant!

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Of course, Morrison Davidson had to tell me, with awe, of Robert Burns. Later I studied Burns. I liked the happy turn of his sentences. There was genius in his pen. Always he wrote with great human understanding, as a man sensing the need for much forgiveness and sympathy. As a poet, I liked him even when he erred. As a man, I did not like him. His faults were too glaring. He had no consistent philosophy.

Speaking of Burns, Davidson told me of the small town of Kirkcudbright, of its Burns' traditions, humour, and stories. Burns had visited Kirkcudbright, and had written his usual rhyme on the wall:

When Januar' winds were blawin' cauld
To Kirkcudbright I took my way.
The mirksome night did me enfold
Till earliest day.

Saladin cut across the comments of Davidson by giving his own views of Burns. He told me of Mrs. Riddell of Woodley Park, three or four miles from Dumfries, on the Galloway side of the Nith. She was the "Maria" of the love and devotion of Robert Burns, and the "pickled frog" of the grotesque aversion of another poet, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe.

On the back of a receipt from his father's Dumfries agents Walker and Gordon, dated January 8, 1808, Kirkpatrick wrote:

"I do not choose to remember—or rather to record—Burns' frailties, however such things might amuse the public. . . . these, however, bore no proportion to his genius."

Kirkpatrick proceeded to refer to a Lady *"whose intimacy with B did him essential injury."*

He then described her:

"She was an affected—painted—crooked postiche—with a mouth from ear to ear—and a turned-up nose—bandy legs—which she however thought fit to display—and a flat bosom, rubbed over with pearl powder, a cornelian cross hung artfully as a contrast, which she bared in the evening to her petticoat tyings—this pickled frog (for such she looked among her own collection of natural curiosities) Burns admired and loved."

This letter was unearthed by Mr. M'Naught of Kilmuns just before my association with *Saladin* began. The Agnostic chief was full of it and it was a theme of much discussion and cross-talk between him and Davidson.

In contrast to Kirkpatrick, Allan Cunningham described Mrs. Riddle as *"beautiful"* and declares that she was *young and accomplished!*

Mrs. Riddle irritated Burns by teasing him and at one time she played at paying attention to a military officer, whom Burns stigmatised as *"one of those lobster-coated puppies"*. It is a pity that Robert Burns did not always view militarism in this fashion.

Burns further expressed his irritation by writing Mrs. Riddle's epitaph:

Here lies now, a prey to insulting neglect
What once was a butterfly, gay in life's beam;
Want only of wisdom denied her respect,
Want only of goodness denied her esteem.

Burns needed an epitaph first and merited the severity more than the victim of his verse.

In the censure of Mrs. Riddle both *Saladin* and Davidson concurred. Of course, in the end they would always get round to Ingersoll's famous tribute to Burns written on the occasion of the great Agnostic's visit to Ayr on August 28, 1878:

Though Scotland boasts a thousand names
Of patriot, king, and peer,
The noblest, grandest of them all
Was loved and cradled here;

Here lived the gentle peasant prince,
The loving cottar king,
Compared with whom the greatest lord
Is but a titled thing.

'Tis but a cot roofed in with straw,
A hovel made of clay;
One door shuts out the snow and storm,
One window greets the day;
And yet I stand within this room
And hold all thrones in scorn,
For here beneath this lowly thatch
Love's sweetest bard was born.

Within this hallowed hut I feel
Like one who clasps a shrine,
When the glad lips at last have touched
The something deemed divine;
And here the world through all the years
As long as day returns,
The tribute of its love and tears
Will pay to Robert Burns.

The last word on Robert Burns having been given to Ingersoll, it was inevitable that the talk in the *Agnostic Journal* office between *Saladin* and Morrison Davidson should turn to Ingersoll. *Saladin* would recall the death of Ingersoll, on Friday, July 21, 1899. This, in turn, would lead to discussion on Agnosticism and Theism. The discussion got nearer home and came to the death of Charles Bradlaugh, which occurred in 1891. *Saladin* had been the enemy of Bradlaugh, largely because of the latter's support of birth-control. On this point, I would take the side of Bradlaugh for I deemed he was right and *Saladin* wrong.

From the moment I first thought on the sex question, I was in favour of birth-control. Discussion on death and Ingersoll and Bradlaugh tended to bring the Scots interlude back to talk that really helped me in my development. The story of this interlude, and of Morrison Davidson's own career rounds off this important education which I enjoyed in the office of the *Agnostic Journal.* This was the true university. Education moves in a mysterious way its wonders to achieve.

6. NEWTON STEWART

. . . my old and much-loved birthplace.
—12TH DUKE OF BEDFORD

A few days after the Mrs. Riddle lecture, I again met Morrison Davidson in the *Agnostic Journal* office. He brushed aside the fact that I was very much an Englishman as was obvious from my Cockney accent. He ignored, with a grand sweep of his walking-stick, my lack of interest in the ancient history of his native land. His tongue lashed me with a fervent scholastic Scottish provincialism. He did not and could not understand that history, even English history, made no appeal to me. My interest was biographical and social. I constructed my own history from the pursuit of biography. To me this was living history.

I loved the social and radical underworld, its thinkers, heretics, and rebels. The real folk for me were all those staunch pioneers of low estate. Davidson pushed this bias to the side and reiterated that I must love old-time Scotland. I found this insistence of his somewhat amusing. However I took his lectures in my stride largely because I believed that all roads led to Rome and I did not mind how knowledge came. His fairy-land history of old Scotland intrigued me but my mind always returned to the historic struggles of Clerkenwell. This was beyond his understanding for the Scot in him was more manifest than the radical.

Thirty-six years later, I was to see, for the first time, the Newton Stewart he so lovingly described to me. Then I visited the unfortunate 12th Duke of Bedford and wrote my name in the visitors' book at Cairnsmore. I have no time for royalty, ancient or modern, but Morrison Davidson would swell with pride as he detailed to me the last night that Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, spent in Scotland. I could not sympathise with his mood for I regarded even then kings and queens as an affront to my dignity as a human being. I could not see them as other than parasites. The king, should I meet one, would receive my courtesy as from one man to another. But awe or reverence, never.

Dramatically and emotionally, Davidson portrayed the morning of May 13, 1568, when Mary, Queen of Scots, sat on her palfrey, overlooking the then village of Langside a few miles from Glasgow. Within three-quarters

of an hour, she was fleeing for her life, her armies routed. With pursuing parties seeking her she was guided by Lord Herries to the wilds of Galloway. As he recounted the flight, Davidson would grow more and more dramatic in his oratory. When years later I saw Langside there was no aura of romance around it and its appearance was as drab and dull as was that of Clerkenwell. The romance of Mary Stuart is a thing of the past and matters not a whit to the modern Scot. Not, how Mary Queen of Scots fled her native land, but how the workers are to live in Scotland matters today.

In my visits to the Duke of Bedford at Cairnsmore when he related some of the legend and romance of the countryside, the uppermost question in my mind was that of war and peace. The fate of the common people of the world, and not the romance of a queen, is the proper concern of all thinking folk.

7. SCOTS DICTIONARY

Words are the wings of action.
—LAVATER

One good thing that Morrison Davidson did was to tell me about *The Scottish Gallowidian Encyclopedia.* This book was the work of John McTaggart and was published in the eighties of the 19th century. McTaggart seems to have been regarded as an eccentric and to be unhonoured and unsung. Actually, he compiled a great and most interesting dictionary. He gives us a list, with definitions, of old Scots words. He has been quoted but I do not think he has ever received the appreciation his work merits. Both *Saladin* and Davidson reverenced him not alone for his wisdom but also for his humour.

Language is a living thing and words lose or change their meaning. But so many of the dead words have such expressive meaning that their departure from everyday use is a loss. Look at these all-descriptive old Scots words:

BIRKIE—A would-be gentleman.

BIRST—A person full of importance.

BLUMF—A stupid loggerhead of a fellow who will not brighten up with any weather, who "grumfs" at all genuine sports, and sits as sour as the devil when all around him are joyous.

BACHLE—An awkward-footed woman.

CHAWCHLIN—Eating like a swine.

CHIRKLE—To grind the teeth on each other as do sheep.

CHOLLERS—Lumps of fat beneath the chin—double chins.

CLASHBAG—A person full of low, mean stories.

CLASHMACLAVERS—Low, idle, scandalous tales.

CLIPPIE—A person with too neat-cut clothes.

CLUNK—The noise which is produced when a cork is drawn out of a bottle.

CUTTY-GLIES—A little squat-made woman extremely fond of the opposite sex and good at winking or "glying".

GABBIE-LABBIE—Confused talking, the way we think foreigners talk when we know not their language.

GIEZIE—A person fond of prying into matters which do not concern him.

GILL-PIES—Young girls looking out for husbands.

GILLY-GAWKIE—A long-made and rompish girl.

PINKLE-PANKLE—The sound of liquid in a bottle.

RIPPET—A bitter-tempered, chattering creature.

SNOIT—A young, conceited person who speaks little. Thought to be the beginning of some genius, but alas! it generally remains a "snoit" all its days.

SUMPH—A fool, or one who wishes to seem so.

WHITTERING—Running about in a strange, simple manner. The way a modest lover haunts his mistress.

8. PAUL JONES

I profess myself a citizen of the world.
—PAUL JONES

One part of Morrison Davidson's conversation interested me tremendously. It took me to the New World and stimulated in me a desire to read about the United States. I have a deep regard for the rebelling Colonists who founded the United States of America. I deplore the colour bar, the numerous anti-syndicalist laws, the conscription Acts, the Smith Act, and all the F.B.I. anti-political freedom activity, which defames the United States today and makes havoc of the immortal Bill of Rights. I rejoice in the terms of the written constitution of the United States and only deplore its travesty by corrupt politicians posing as statesmen. Their conduct gives point to Patrick Henry's warning.

Morrison Davidson told me of Paul Jones, the Galloway gardener's boy, who founded the American navy. This remarkable Scotsman proved himself a truly great rebel. Davidson said that in Kirkcudbright they do not like to look upon Paul Jones as a pirate, though the British have called him that, but do say: *"He put the whund up the country sae weel that maybe in revenge posterity hasna been verra kind to him."*

The story of Paul Jones has been told time and time again but this is an incident related to me by Morrison Davidson:

In April 1778, rumour had it that Paul Jones had rounded the Firth of Forth and was lying off Kirkcaldy. A three-master frigate disguised as merchantman slipped into the bay. It had been fitted out by the Americans to attack British shipping under the command of Paul Jones. He landed with forty men. They went to the home of the Earl of Selkirk with orders to kidnap him. Paul Jones had been a gardener's boy on the Earl's estate and it was said that Paul Jones believed himself to be Selkirk's illegitimate son. His plan was to capture the Earl and hold him as a hostage for the good treatment of American prisoners-of-war.

The plan came to nought for the Earl was away from home. The raiders returned to their ship with all the silver plate which they had demanded from the Countess. Then the *Ranger*, as the ship was called, put out to sea again.

The story of this raid is contained in the Charter Chest of St. Mary's Isle, in which are the letters that passed between Paul Jones and the Earl and Countess of Selkirk about the theft of the silver plate.

Paul Jones, in one of his letters, wrote about this episode in remarkable terms of apology that more modern militarists and invaders might well emulate. To the Countess he wrote:

It cannot be too much lamented that in the profession of arms, the officer of fine feelings and of real sensibility should be under the necessity of winking at any action of persons under his command which his heart cannot approve.

He concluded with the promise that when the spoons and forks and jugs should be put up for sale he would purchase them and return them with his respects to their rightful owners.

Paul Jones kept his word. Six years later, he wrote the Earl of Selkirk to say that he was forwarding the plate to London. He also sent a letter to the Countess regretting that he was only permitted by his agents to pay carriage as far as London because:

I could have wished to have ended this delicate business by delivering the plate to you at St. Mary's Isle in Scotland.

On the American War, Paul Jones wrote:

Tho' I have drawn my sword in the present generous struggle for the right of man, yet I am not in arms as an American, nor am I in pursuit of riches. My fortune is liberal enough, having no wife nor family, and having lived long enough to know that riches cannot ensure happiness. I profess myself a citizen of the world, totally unfettered by the little, mean distinctions of climate or country which diminish the benevolence of the heart and set bounds to philanthropy. Before this war began I had at an early time of life withdrawn from sea service in favour of "calm contemplation and poetic ease". I have sacrificed not only my favourite scheme of life, but the softer affections of the heart and my prospects of

domestic happiness, and I am ready to sacrifice my life also with cheerfulness, if that forfeiture could restore peace and goodwill among mankind.

Paul Jones defied the British Navy with a squadron of five French and American ships. A little later, this Scottish gardener's son is seen bowing above the hands of ladies in foreign Courts, hailed everywhere, except in Britain, as a great naval hero.

Catherine the Great of Russia summoned him to her aid in her war with the Turk. He became a Russian rear-admiral. Four years after this, he died in Paris in poverty, slandered and deserted.

Morrison Davidson discussed intelligently Jones's faults and follies, his love of honours and applause. Jones was the first accredited officer to fly the Stars and Stripes in Europe and he was a famous sailor. History regards him as one of Galloway's greatest sons.

This record of these *Agnostic Journal* discussions recalls to me the career of Morrison Davidson himself. The effect of his radicalism and humanism on my thought is difficult to estimate. John Barleycorn had reduced his scholarship to rags and he had grown into an opportunist, with just a flair of thought remaining. He worried me with romantic history at a time when my chief concern was the struggle for Secularism and Socialism in Clerkenwell.

9. JOHN MORRISON DAVIDSON—THE MAN

He was born to be a man but elected to be a character and a journalist.

—ANON.

The most important lesson I learned from the strange scholastic musings of John Morrison Davidson was the need of integrity in life. Actually, the *Agnostic Journal* office was my college. From *Saladin* came the learning and from Davidson's ramblings the inspiration. Davidson taught better than he knew. Yet he had made of himself rather a character than a man who had developed character.

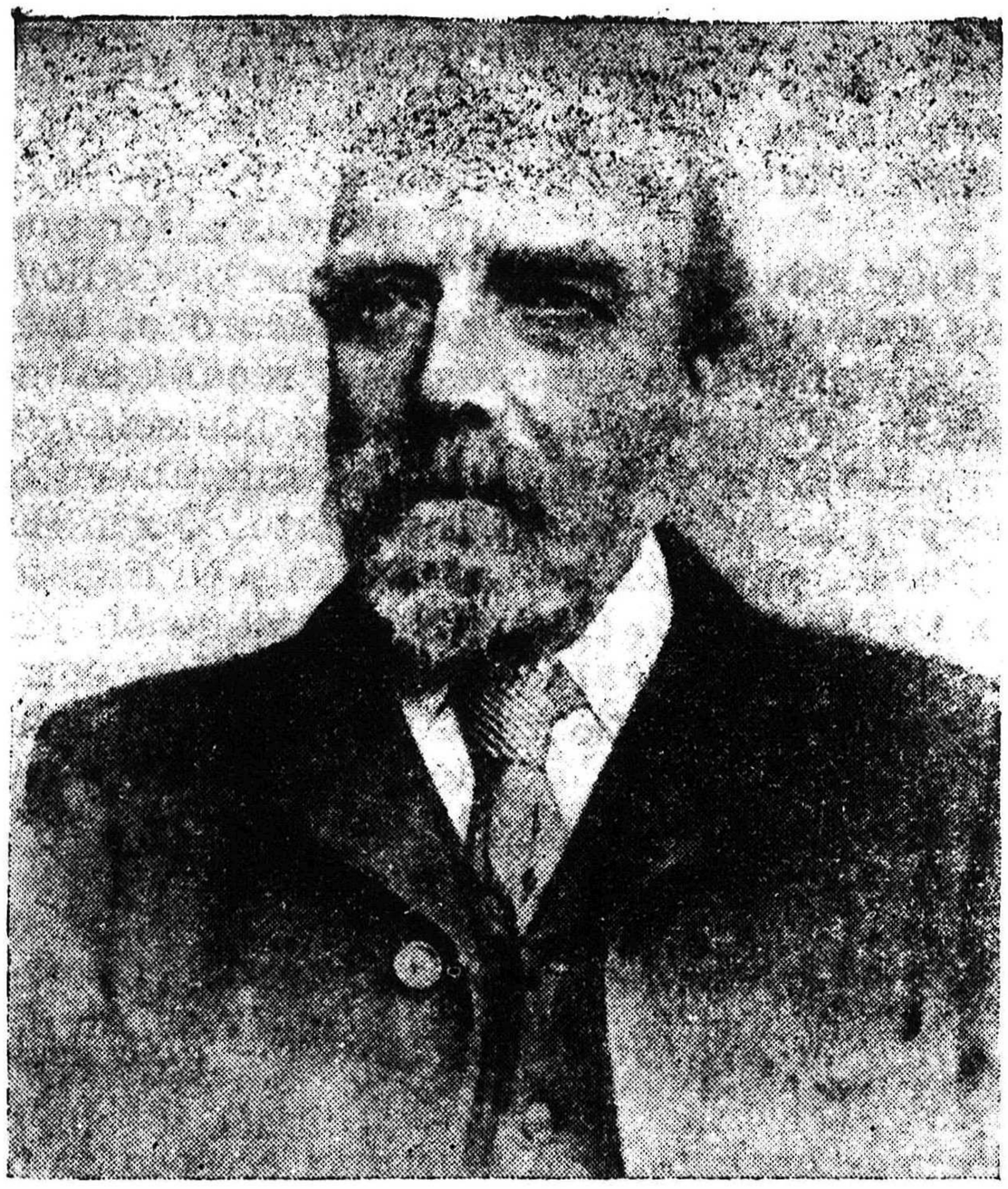
Davidson aimed to be one of the most vigorous champions of the oppressed peasants and labourers. His pen was trenchant enough. But he lacked the thoroughness essential to the correct use of such a pen. To be gifted with vision and yet to fail one's vision—that is indeed tragedy. Such tragedy marred the life and work of John Morrison Davidson. As I realised his failure I felt the sadness of his life: and I resolved, whatever my failure, it would not be as that which had overtaken Morrison Davidson. The failure of the cross, the objective failure imposed by one's enemies, and an unbelieving world, I could endure: but not the failure that came from myself, from within my own being. I could not forgive the Kingdom of God not dwelling within me. Such was the great mystic lesson of dignity and righteousness Morrison Davidson taught me by his *Agnostic Journal* discussions. It was a wonderful experience: and I rejoice that I had sought out the *Agnostic Journal* office instead of the *Clarion* headquarters, which finally proved the home of a mere parliamentary careerist ramp. This was taking place even during the time I was in Fleet Street.

For a number of years Morrison Davidson was the foremost writer for *Reynolds Newspaper*. Radical thinking people all over the English-speaking world eagerly read his famous "Politics for the People", a noted feature in *Reynolds* which partly was responsible for its international standing.

In character, Davidson was Republican and anti-authoritarian. At the time I knew him he had become strongly anti-statist and anarchist. Enwrapped in the ideals of the immortal Tolstoy, his anarchism was a shroud that did not conceal the lack of inner power. It was the trimming of his mind and not the fabric. There was truth, logic and force in his anarchism but there was no integrity.

As a boy, Morrison had not been vigorous physically. For this lack nature atoned by giving him strong mental activity. He never learned to direct and stabilise that activity.

At the age of 16, he obtained a scholarship by public examination. This enabled him to enter Aberdeen University. He was not long enrolled there before he collided with authority in the shape of one of the principal



JOHN MORRISON DAVIDSON



Yrs. in the Cause,
Saladin.

professors. By his defying publicly this man Davidson's continuation at the University became impossible.

He left the university and mixed among radical circles. He sympathised with the patriotic Poles when they rose in insurrection in 1863. The Poles' aim was to make Poland a nation. Michael Bakunin, that powerful Russian revolutionary of the 19th century, proclaimed the justice of their demand. At one with them, John Morrison Davidson endeavoured to join the Poles. He was only twenty years of age and doubtless his fervid enthusiasm was the young man's expression of life. Those in control of the Polish insurrection refused to let Davidson join the struggle. They had no time for the eager young liberator. Obviously the leaders of the Polish insurrection were narrowly "National" *not* cosmopolitan.

Discarded by the Polish leaders, Davidson returned to Scotland and married Rose Fowlie, a girl schoolmate. This union resulted in six girls and five boys!

Many folk may deem me a puritan. When *Saladin* told me the size of the Davidson family, and clearly saw nothing unusual in it, I was revolted. As I was young some folk might think that this was an absurd prudery that ought to have had no place in my youthful make-up. I was young but I had thought somewhat on the question of sex. The stupid muddle my mother had made of her life I knew. I had no doubt that my father was making a like muddle of his. This sentencing of people to life, dragging them out of the never-never land into the very real sordidness of living until eventually death came and they returned to the eternal nothingness, appalled me. Passion it may have been. A like urge have the animals of the field. Love it was not. I saw no romance in the stupid business.

Reflecting on the explanation of Davidson's conduct did not impress me with the idealism of monogamic mating. The sexes being unequal in number, if sex relationship is so necessary, and if it is as necessary to woman as to man, something like polygamy or even promiscuity seems to be the solution. Even monogamic marriage protects itself with ceremonies, not from piety, but from interest. Alas! this ceremonial marriage reduces all extra-marital association, all truly free and really love association, to the level of prostitution. Which it is not. Promiscuity does not imply what the unhealthy mind of the puny monogamic moralist says is the case. Promiscuity does not mean clandestine sex association, devoid of choice and selection. It is obvious that the extent of any man's or woman's association must be limited by time, place, and circumstance. The limitation is natural and severe. The orthodox view of the evils of promiscuity is a travesty of fact. It is not helpful and it does not cure prostitution. It simply makes a weed of what should be a flower. In any case, if a man must have eleven children, I would think that it was wiser and kinder to have them by two or three mothers than by one. I have no sympathy with large families and I have no bouquets for such expression of passion. I have not today and I did not have in my youth. I learned a lot from Davidson. For that I thank his shade. But the man himself horrified me. I could not have the same easy tolerance of his morals as *Saladin* had.

Eleven children! Eleven hostages to fortune! Eleven reasons why he should not think defiantly! Eleven grounds for being a moral coward! What a terrible position for a man who could have been a scholar and an emancipator! What the world needs is less parents and more liberators. We should be the parents of the next generation and not just our own little physical portion of it.

It must not be concluded from the above that I am urging promiscuity or ever did. I do not. I simply say that if every person, irrespective of sex, must have sex experience, as the orthodox suggest; and if there are more members of one sex than the other in any given generation, then ethically, some approach to promiscuity is inevitable. If this is so, the fact should be accepted as a fact. There ought to be no hypocrisy about the matter.

Davidson and his young wife went to Glasgow where he became a teacher in various schools but found no satisfaction in his work or charges. After a time, he was appointed headmaster of a school at Berwick. From there he went to London as one of the masters of the famous Circus Place School. Davidson's heart was not in teaching. He found no rest, no happiness, no ease in the occupation. So he resolved to qualify for the Scottish Bar. He obtained a complete mastery of legal principles and was a distinguished law student. This merely made him yearn for politics. He put jurisprudence and a knowledge of law above argument and practising.

In 1869, at the age of 26, he turned journal-

ist. He began to write regularly for the newspapers. His first contributions appeared in the *Peterhead Sentinel* as leaders. Later, he was leader writer for the Edinburgh *Daily Review*. Then he was appointed editor.

Still questing he went to London, and entered the Middle Temple. He was called to the English Bar in the year 1877.

Three years from this time he visited the western states of America to investigate cattle ranching and mining for a syndicate of British journals. His chief studies were conducted in Montana and Nevada. His *Letters from the Far West* attracted much attention for their vigorous setting and practical character. He became a literary lion in Washington society. The President, Rutherford B. Hayes, received him with the utmost consideration. The literary circles of the United States paid tribute to him.

On his return to Britain, Davidson became Secretary of the People's League for the Abolition of the House of Lords. In *Reynolds Newspaper* he published his famous work, *The Book of Lords*.

The *Reynolds News* of today would have no time for Davidson's attack on the House of Lords. The paper is too busy publishing articles by Earl Attlee who now enjoys the Order of the Bath.

To the *Weekly Times and Echo*, Davidson contributed his most outstanding work, *The Old Order and the New*. This depicted the five periods of human servitude.

For *Reynolds*, Davidson wrote *The New Book of Kings;* the *Annals of Toil; Scotia Rediviva;* and his greatest historical research work, *The Book of Erin*.

For the *Weekly Dispatch*, a very different journal from its direct descendant the *Sunday Dispatch* of today, he wrote: *Eminent Radicals in Parliament; Apostles of Democracy;* and numerous radical essays.

These serial works were reprinted and circulated widely in book form.

Eminent Radicals is an index to Davidson's thought. He dealt with twelve persons: Gladstone; John Bright; Peter Alfred Taylor; Sir Charles Dilke; Joseph Cowen; Sir Wilfred Lanson; Henry Fawcett; Joseph Chamberlain; Thomas Burt; Leonard Courtney; Anthony Mundella.

Radically, all of these persons were unsatisfactory. At the best they were politicians very slightly inclining towards ideas of political freedom. Some became Imperialist renegades. They were of unequal worth. Davidson was supposed to be an Anarchist yet he paid tribute to these men indiscriminately. To my mind, this work was only pot-boiling journalism.

It cannot be said that Davidson pursued a logical or consistent course. He was a brilliant man undermined by too much drinking. A Liberal and Radical, his outlook was anti-authoritarian and therefore anarchist. He was not opposed to revolutionary struggle but he showed no desire to aid it or to participate in it. He favoured reformist courses, all of which lead inevitably to careerism, and are devoid of all vitality. He viewed Jesus as a man and a master agitator, a genius of Freedom, but made no effort to present his opinion in a sound logical concept. His agnostic friends played with the Sun Myth theory and he never attempted to come to grips with this error. He accepted Freethought ironies and weak cynicisms with a humorous tolerance. Such an attitude ought not to have been adopted by a man of his shrewd understanding. I remember the many discussions between him and Ernest Pack. The latter's forte was ridicule and he had no zeal for truth. Pack used to describe Davidson's *The Gospel of the Poor* as *The Gospel on the Floor*.

NOTE

For the pictures of John Morrison Davidson and W. Stewart Ross ("Saladin"), on page 108, I wish to express my gratitude, for their courtesy and research, to Mr. A. B. Paterson, City Librarian, and his assistants at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

The Davidson picture is from the cover of "Annals of Toil".

An obituary notice of Davidson appears in the "Law Times" for December 23, 1916.

Saladin's picture belongs to an early period of his life and is from his biography by R. B. Hithersay and George Ernest.

A short biography of "Saladin" appears in Joseph McCabe's "Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalism".

PART V. WITH THE PARLIAMENTARIANS

1. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

. . . at last we find ourseles in the treacherous bog of parliamentarism, which by its failures kills everything that is healthy.

—W. LIEBKNECHT *in 1874*

Early in 1904, discussion in Hyde Park and at the Peel Institute, references to Professor Huxley at the *Agnostic Journal* office, my own dissatisfaction with mere metaphysics, caused me to study Thomas Huxley. His lectures and essays I found to be of absorbing interest. As he was noted for his popularising of science and of Darwin, his Romanes address of 1893 on *Evolution and Ethics* had a special appeal to me. It made me into a complete Socialist. I saw that the so-called struggle for existence gave way naturally to a higher moral struggle of mutual aid and fitting to survive. Competitive murder was not the logical conclusion of evolution.

I dealt fully with this theme at the time in the columns of *Justice* and *The Social Democrat*. These essays have been reprinted since and I need only describe the impression Huxley's reasoning made on me, and how it resulted in my becoming a social democrat.

In his Romanes lecture, Huxley insisted that "the influence of the cosmic process on society is the greater, the more rudimentary its civilisation". He spoke of social progress checking the cosmic process at every step, and substituting for it the ethical process. It thus repudiated the gladiatorial theory of existence, and permitted Huxley to rebuke "the fanatical individualism of our time" for attempting "to apply the analogy of cosmic nature to society".

"Social life, and the ethical process in virtue of which it advances towards perfection" Huxley defines as being, strictly speaking, "part and parcel of the general process of evolution". Readers of Kropotkin will see in this a support of the latter's view of "mutual aid" as "a factor in evolution". It must be remembered, however, that Huxley's "ethical process" is developed, by its author, into a plea for sentimentalism and loyalty to interests of an abstraction termed "the community". I believe in the community—in a different social order, but can see only two classes today. Huxley sees no classes, only a "community". And Kropotkin's "mutual aid" tends to create faith in the same paralysing and fatal abstraction. Only under special circumstances, could I regard class society as a community—and that for a very limited purpose.

All this was not clear to me at the time. Huxley has pleaded powerfully the grandeur of the Anarchist ideal. I never considered that his 1893 lecture was preaching a morality, a law, and an order which tended to negate all rebel effort. But I became emancipated from neo-Darwinian fears. Capitalism and the struggle for existence were not the last word in social evolution. Equity, mutual aid, freedom, justice, etc., did represent realisable ideals. Socialism was the inevitable goal of all social development. This vision of the coming social harmony, this conviction that the new era would dawn, filled me with new energy. I knew that I had to leave the capitalist parties and enter the real movement, that of Socialism and working-class emancipation. So I turned my back on compromise and radicalism, on liberal-labourism and pure-and-simple secularism, and joined the Social Democratic Federation.

That was in March 1905. My membership of this organisation was a very stormy one, and only lasted down to October 1906. By this date I was convinced that social democracy was a very poor affair, although I continued to write for *Justice* till December 1906.

Although I did not formally join the S.D.F. until 1905, my association with the Socialist movement, using the term in its broadest sense to cover the activity of parliamentarians and anti-parliamentarians alike, dates from 1904. In London, the great division then was between Social Democrats and Communist Anarchists. In London, the I.L.P. hardly counted. In Kent and some of the small towns bordering London the I.L.P. had supporters and branches. In some cases, as in Rochester and Gillingham, there was rivalry

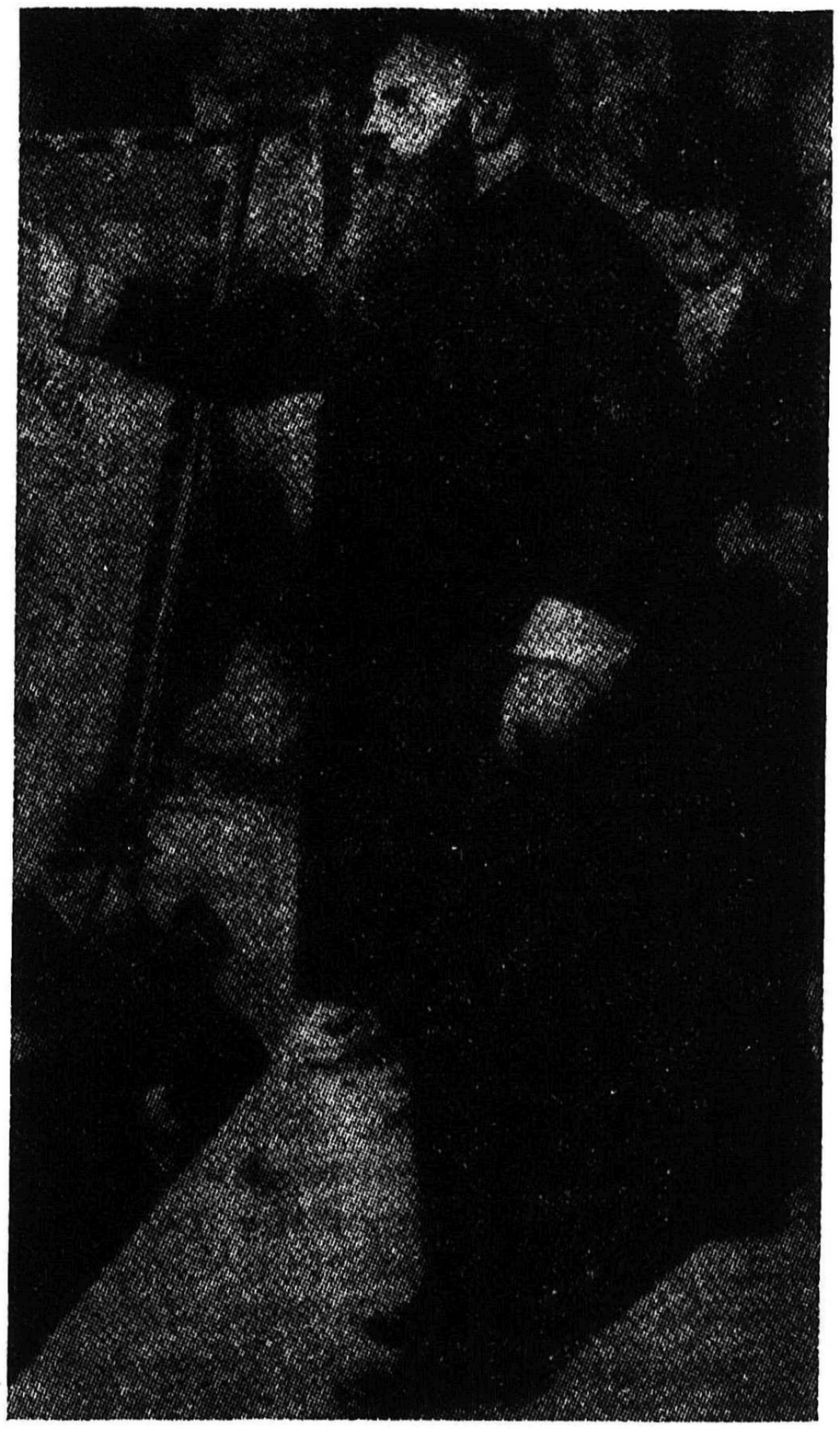
between the branches of the two organisations. There was constant dispute concerning affiliation to the Labour Party.

The Anarchists were very direct-actionist in their views and were divided between discipleship of Bakunin and Kropotkin. Later, a strong anti-parliamentary movement, more definitely Marxist in tone, developed in Glasgow and other parts of Scotland. Also, on the outskirts of London, particularly in Woolwich. Here again some confusion was developing because De Leon's One Big Union idea was spreading which combined parliamentarism and anti-parliamentarism. This concept was not the loose Social Democratic idea of from the ballot-box to the bomb, but one of definite scientific organisation. It was well worked out theory but it did not appeal to the working-class mind.

Social Democrats were parliamentarians. They wrote of Marx and discussed him. To my mind, they did not seem to understand him very well. Although the Social Democrats celebrated the Paris Commune just as the Anarchists celebrated Chicago, they learned no lessons from the tremendous event of the Paris Commune. Looking back, I can see how thoroughly anti-Commune they were in their outlook and policy. Inevitably, they became renegades. They were a post-Commune organisation in point of time and they arose to declare the Commune's collapse. Their history was defined by the very time that they arose. It took me a year to sense that Social Democracy was Capitalism and careerism, a complete negation of the Paris Commune. It took me a few years longer to realise how completely anti-Socialist it was. The S.D.F. was an anti-Marxist and careerist organisation from the very start.

Social Democracy, as a term, has no necessary connection with capitalist parliamentarism. In reality, social democracy is the direct antithesis to parliamentarism. Yet one is compared with the other and parliamentarism is regarded as the synonym of social democracy. Anti-parliamentarism is not excluded by social democracy. On the contrary, it can be shown quite clearly that anti-parliamentarism defines accurately social democracy. To any student of the Paris Commune this fact should be obvious.

Social Democracy defines industrial and useful society as opposed to capitalist political and financial society. Experience has shown that parliamentarism is careerism and not democracy. At its highest state level, parliamentarism creates a new ruling class. Without economic justice and economic equality, there can be no true society, no true democracy.



H. M. HYNDMAN

Addressing a meeting in Trafalgar Square. The man as the the author knew him in the days when he was a member of the S.D.F.

In my first acceptance of Socialism I ignored this strict phrase-making of Social Democracy. Anxious to prove myself a warrior in the class struggle, I rushed into the rough and ready struggle of propaganda and gave no heed to the war of ideas that registers the death of an old social order and the birth of a new. Yet the world—and I, as a citizen of the world—was entering on such an era of class society. This period was one that saw the birth of the "German Menace" and the trade war against Kaiserism. Out of this war arose Sovietism and Nazism, a world trend towards social revolution, and the death of parliamentarism.

Social Democracy, through the logic of its parliamentary thesis, identified itself with

militarism. With all the power of its marvellous careerism, it destroyed itself and negated the workers' struggle to transform capitalism. Parliamentarism is careerism and the betrayal of Socialism. This is not some abstract truth but concrete experience.

From this time on I endeavoured to define the reality of the struggle towards Socialism in opposition to parliamentarism. This brought me into opposition to the pseudo-Marxist school of Plekanoff. I was opposed to Hyndman and also to the parliamentary impossibilists who advanced the view that political opportunism was no part of Social Democracy. I began to see that the workers had to build their own social organisation and evolve their political expression of organisation within the womb of the old society.

This was the social revolution taking form in my mind. Eleven clear years before the Soviet Revolution I subscribed to Sovietism. Yet since the rise of the Communist International I have suffered denunciation by those Social Democrats who called themselves Communists and went over to the defence of the Russian Revolution. They were not revolutionaries, but applauders of whoever was predominant in the U.S.S.R. at the moment. I have heard these unprincipled scoundrels applaud Trotsky, merely because he was in power. I have seen them pass over from Leninism to Stalinism and salute Stalin as a god. Today, Stalin is dead and repudiated in the Soviet Union. So now they engage in the anti-personality cult. What is needed is a campaign against the leader-appetite cult.

Psuedo-Communism and pseudo-Socialism have split the working-class movement and delayed the movement of emancipation. Social Democracy has betrayed the workers. In their stupidity, the workers could not see this truth. For fifty years I have pleaded with them to note this simple fact. To my fundamental exposure of careerism the proletariat declined to give heed. They preferred capitalist war, conscription and betrayal.

2. JACK WILLIAMS

Organise! To demand the Right to Work!
—JACK WILLIAMS at Tower Hill

The 1906 General Election brought about my withdrawal from the S.D.F. It also caused me to resign from the *Daily Chronicle*.

At this Election, the Social Democratic Federation nominated John E. Williams and Councillor Gribble for Parliament to represent Northampton. I do not remember the votes they obtained as I had lost interest in parliamentarism by then. I know that the S.D.F. promised that if these two men were elected to Westminster *"both the House of Commons and the Country"* would *"ring with their championship of the working-class"*. This shows what nonsense has been published in the name of Socialism. The Communists have told the same story several times since and just as falsely. The S.D.F. softened the clangour of its assertion by adding that they would *"undoubtedly push to the front many reforms which are necessary to bring some brightness and happiness into the people's lives"*. Which would have been real nice of these worthies! It is noticeable that certain of the more intimate colleagues of Williams and Gribble, like W. S. Cluse with whom I was associated closely as a propagandist in the Clerkenwell branch, have sat in the House of Commons since 1906, and two members reached the House of Lords, without doing much ringing and without pushing to the front any reforms. Islington is about as dull as ever and Highbury is, if anything, somewhat less bright.

I knew Jack Williams well during the 1904 period. He spoke a lot at Tower Hill and he hated the sight of me as only an alleged Socialist can hate another alleged Socialist.

On one occasion Williams asked me specially to speak at Tower Hill with him, during one of his unemployed performances. I did not believe in such demonstrations because I felt them to be futile, reformist, and careerist. I went, loyally, and against my better judgment. The journey from where I lived to Tower Hill was more difficult then than now. When I arrived, as I was moving through the crowd, Williams saw me. Turning to his chairman, he exclaimed: *"For God's sake, don't let Aldred speak!"*

Had I not been requested I would not have

been there. I did not want to go. I had no wish to speak, I went, in my innocence, to oblige. That was my reception. I have every reason to dislike the Socialist and Anarchist movements because, at no time, have these movements treated me decently.

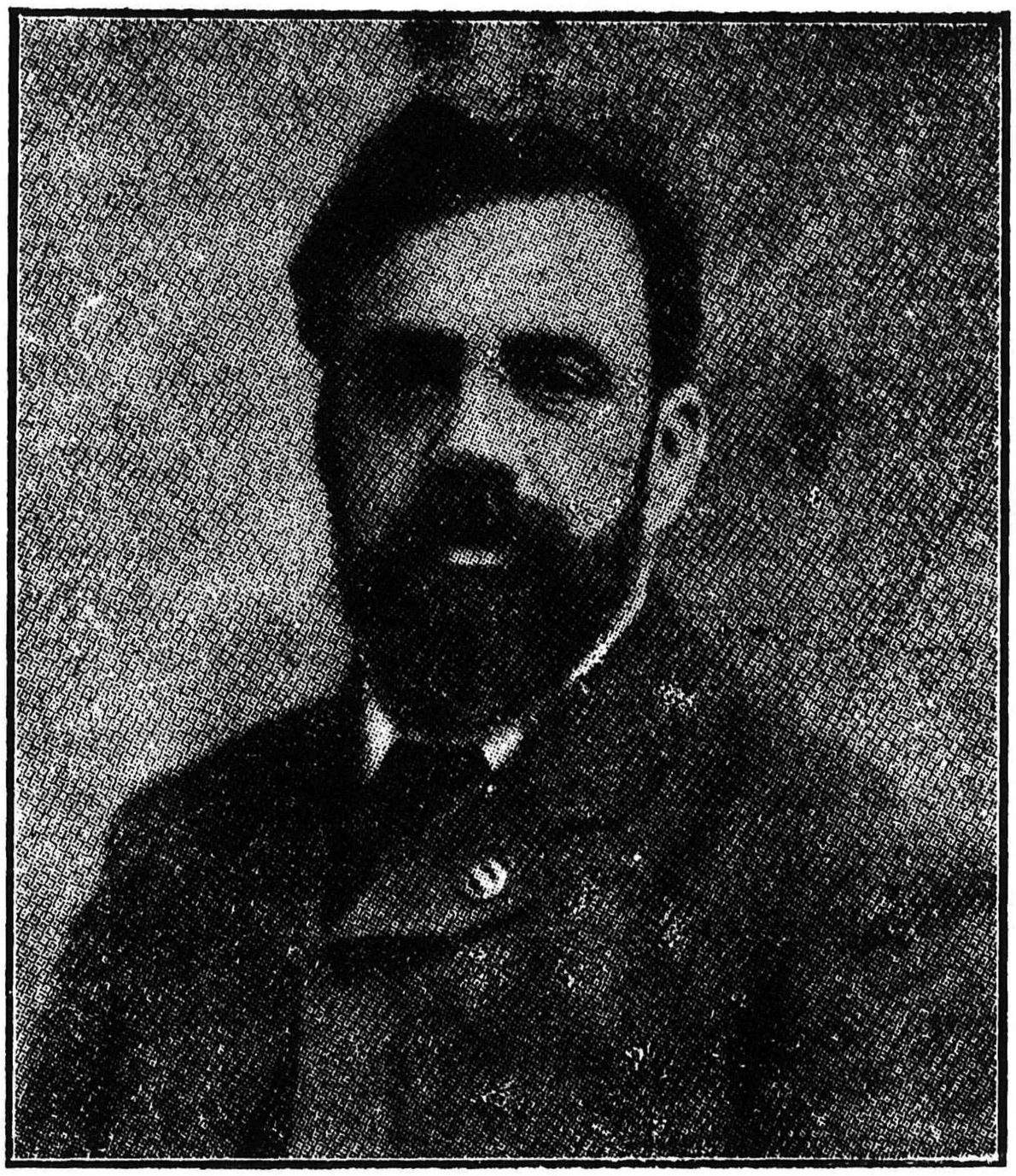
Jack Williams represented the intellectual worth and approach of a section of that movement. He defined hunger which turns to careerism; its ignorance, which turns to arrogance and authority; its vulgarity, which makes scholastic understanding of life impossible. From the standpoint of Socialism, his activity offended me as a kind of blasphemy. Williams lacked philosophy. Conditions explained him but propagandists ought not to have to fall upon conditions as an excuse. They should have a vein of idealism running through them or they are lost because fundamentally visionless. Jack Williams had no idealism. As a Socialist, he was a product of poverty not of understanding.

Williams was born in St. Georges Road, Holloway, North London, in 1854. His father was a shoemaker by trade, but joined the Welsh Fusiliers. When the Crimean War broke out he was sent to Russia and participated in the siege of Sebastopol. He was injured and returned to England in the first batch of wounded soldiers. Jack Williams was born on the day his father died. His mother received no pension, and she had a terrible struggle against poverty.

Mrs. Williams maintained her children by washing and charing for a few years. Then cancer overtook her and she died in the Workhouse Infirmary. Jack was seven years old at this time. He was reared and educated in three Workhouses: the Strand Union Schools at Edmonton; the Workhouse of St. Margaret and St. John. Westminster: and the Islington Guardians' Workhouse in Hornsey Road. His uncle and aunt rescued him from the second but his aunt died soon afterwards, and he had to resume workhouse life.

Jack Williams escaped from workhouse life when he was ten years old. He climbed the wall: became an errand boy at a newsagent's in Seven Sisters Road, and returned his clothes by parcel post. He enclosed a letter to the authorities, expressing the hope that he would never need their hospitality again.

At the newsagent's he began to read a variety of literature. The Irish were active at this time, and he read regularly *The Nation* and *The Flag of Ireland*. The Fenian agitation excited him and he walked from London to



JACK WILLIAMS

Manchester in order to witness the rumoured attempt to rescue the "Manchester Martyrs" upon the very scaffold being carried through. He slept in outhouses and bought food with the money he had saved. He entered Manchester footsore and weary. Afterwards he walked back.

On his return to London, Williams obtained a situation with a zinc worker on Islington Green. Subsequently, he became a timekeeper to a large builder in the neighbourhood. Here he was taught painting.

During the Franco-Prussian War, his sympathies were with France as a nation. When the Commune came these sympathies turned towards the Communards; and so he became a Socialist. He attended meetings of the International Working Men's Association and finally joined the International Working Men's Club in Rose Street, Soho. This club was divided into five sections: Italian, French, Polish, Russian, and English. Williams spoke at Clerkenwell Green on the Irish question and on Republicanism, which was much in vogue then among the working class. Discussions at the Rose Street Club directed his attention to Republicanism.

Williams joined the Commons Preservation

League, established by John de Morgan. This organisation reclaimed Plumstead Common which had been turned into sandpits by some private corporation. Williams organised a torchlight procession. The fences were pulled down and the pits filled. Similar activity was organised at Woolwich and Hackney Marshes. At Finsbury Park, houses were levelled to the ground. At a later date, Williams led other demonstrations against the East London Water Company.

The Commons Preservation League claimed to have done some splendid work in preserving commons for the people. At each of the demonstrations, Jack Williams delivered an address against capitalism.

The English members of the Rose Street Club met H. M. Hyndman with a view to organising. As a result, the Democratic Federation was founded at the Westminster Palace Hotel, in 1880. Joseph Cowen, M.P. for Newcastle, presided at the inaugural meeting at which Jack Williams was prominent. The Federation held regular meetings and was denounced as a nine days' wonder by the Radical press.

Morrison Davidson has left on record a most interesting study of Cowen after he became M.P. . . . *"a genuine workman from Tyneside, plain and homely to a degree"*. When he began to speak it was in *"the villainous Northumbrian intonation"*, which vanished as he warmed to his subject.

In 1882, Williams engaged in the agitation against the Irish Coercion Bill of Gladstone. This was the eighty-fifth Coercion Bill that had been passed by a Liberal Ministry. Hyndman, Williams, Harry Quelch, Dr. Clarke, Dr. Sam Bennett formed the Anti-Coercion League to rally the country against Gladstone. The only paper that assisted was the famous London evening paper, *The Echo*, which ceased publication in November 1905. The Anti-Coercionists held demonstrations throughout the country, including a monster one in Hyde Park. At Peckham Rye the Radicals marched in force and threw ginger-beer bottles at the conveners of the meeting. Jack Williams received a bad gash on his his head whilst speaking.

In 1883, the Democratic Federation published the manifesto *Socialism Made Plain*. Within a year the Democratic Federation was transformed into the Social Democratic Federation. Much propaganda was undertaken by the S.D.F. When the Morris-Bax split occurred, and the Socialist League was formed in 1884, Williams remained with the parliamentarians. The S.D.F. tried to convert the provinces and Williams became the organiser with James MacDonald, later secretary of the London Trades Council. Williams toured Lancashire and organised the first provincial branch of the S.D.F. at Blackburn.

During the same year, Williams organised a demonstration against the importation of Chinese laundry workers into Britain, and assisted the great strike of stone-masons at the Law Courts. This was also a strike against foreign labour, the fear being that foreign workers would be underpaid. Whether this strike was altogether progressive is a matter for discussion.

Hyndman organised a series of educational lectures for propagandists at Westminster Palace Chambers. Williams attended these as preparation for open-air propaganda.

The authorities determined to suppress open-air meetings. Several meetings were stopped. In 1885, at Dodd Street, Limehouse, the S.D.F. decided to defy the authorities. Williams refused to cease speaking when ordered to do so by the police, and he was arrested. The trial excited great attention, and ended in his being ordered to pay a fine. He refused to pay the fine and was committed to prison for one month in default.

On the Sunday following the release of Williams from prison, a hundred thousand men, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, marched from Victoria Park, where a great demonstration was held, to Dodd Street for the purpose of vindicating the right of public meeting. The march was described by the *Telegraph* as one of the finest that had ever been seen, and the subsequent meeting on the prohibited spot was wildly enthusiastic in favour of the maintenance of public rights.

During the time that Williams was in prison Morris was arrested for a similar offence, but only a small fine was imposed. The authorities were defeated, and no further attempt was made to prevent the holding of meetings in Dodd Street.

At the General Election of 1885, Williams contested Hampstead against the Marquis of Lorne, but only obtained 27 votes.

On February 8, 1886, was held the great demonstration in Trafalgar Square which ended in the march upon the West End of London and the riots in Piccadilly. As a result of this demonstration, Williams, Hyndman, Burns, and Champion were tried at the Old Bailey and acquitted.

Another struggle for free speech took place this year at Bell Street, Edgware Road. Williams was arrested and fined £20. The alternative was two months' imprisonment. He accepted the imprisonment.

Following upon this, the police refused permission to the S.D.F. to sell *Justice* and other literature outside Hyde Park gates. Williams defied the police. He was moved from pillar to post and was arrested eventually. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment but won his case on appeal. Williams conducted his own case. His opening speech occupied one-and-a-half hours. His closing speech, one hour. Before his appeal was heard, he had served four weeks of the sentence at Millbank Prison.

In 1887, Williams took part in the fight for the right of public meeting at Southend. The police prohibited public meetings and Williams went to Southend to fight the prohibition. In one week, ten summonses were issued against him.

At the first hearing, Williams objected to so many of the Magistrates and raised so many points that the hearing of the first summons occupied between eight and nine hours. He was fined half-a-crown and ordered to appear the next day. He told the Bench he should not do so unless his expenses to Southend were paid, and next day he received a letter withdrawing the other nine charges.

Returning to London, he participated in the struggle for free speech at the World's End, Chelsea.

Williams assisted in the organisation that led up to the great dock strike and he assisted in the formation of the following unions: Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union; Navvies, Bricklayers, Labourers, and General Labourers' Union; and the Union of Municipal Employees.

In 1885, he met Charles Booth, and as a result of conversations with him, the latter made his famous investigations into the poverty question.

3 "JUSTICE" AND RELIGION

Creeds are dying, beliefs are changing.
—HENRY GEORGE

My essay on *Socialism and the Natural Inequality of Man,* showing how Huxley had converted me to Socialism, appeared in *Justice,* for June 10, 1905. Two further essays, on the same theme, from my pen, were published in *The Social Democrat.* Then came my Parliamentary Notes, and a variety of letters and reports. On the platform I was very active. It is to my lasting shame that I helped to build up the Movement in Islington which finally returned W. S. Cluse to Westminster. Several reports of my activities were reported in *Justice.* Here is a column from that paper for September 30, 1905:

WEST ISLINGTON—The West Islington branch is making good headway. Some of the local Liberal myrmidons have had a good try at "scotching" us, but with bad result to their own party. On Saturday last, September 23, comrade Aldred, of the Clerkenwell Branch, gave us a very telling discourse, wherein he clearly showed the folly of supporting candidates of the Liberal persuasion. Mr. Buss, a Liberal apologist, of Islington, who was round the meeting, crossed swords with our comrade, who, much to the chagrin of Mr. Buss, had an easy job.

Sunday morning after Sunday morning I spoke at Highbury Corner with Mayhew and Cluse. During the week we addressed meetings at Packham Street, Essex Road.

In March 1906, I was involved in a discussion with R. C. Morrison—later M.P. for North Tottenham, then Lord Morrison—on the question of Socialism and Free Speech. That discussion speeded my break with the S.D.F. The issue of Free Speech in these days of striving for dictatorships, the deliberate closing down of the open spaces to discussion by Councils controlled by Labourists, and radio and television, is one of imperative importance. It must be faced and cannot be swept aside lightly or repudiated with glib phrases. An ignorant generation is being created and the people are being robbed of their right of an open-air university.

A discussion arose in *Justice* during July 1906, about the Socialist Sunday Schools. I

ventured to criticise the idea of imposing Marxism upon the child's mind. Incidentally, to emphasise my point, I styled myself "a Socialist and an Atheist". This led to a bitter discussion and I was attacked for preaching Atheism from the Socialist platform. Obviously, as I was opposed to the idea of trying to capture the child's mind for abstract philosophy, I was doing the direct opposite. I merely used the description to prove that I was on the extremist side and to give point to my plea for toleration and even justice. Belfort Bax defended me. Publicly as well as privately he applauded my stand. One correspondent carried the discussion against me, in a special article, to the columns of the *Agnostic Journal*. Harry Quelch wrote editorially of my "atheistic bigotry". The upshot of all this ridiculous party declamation was that Atheism was proclaimed in *Justice* when there was not any intention of advancing, maintaining, or defending it.

On Monday, April 9, 1906, Mr. Birrell introduced into the House of Commons his ill-fated Education Bill, which was rejected by the House of Lords, on Wednesday, April 19, of that year. I wrote a long article describing its introduction and reception by the Commons for *Justice*. An excerpt was published in the London *Times* for Friday, April 13, 1906 —actually the day before *Justice* officially appeared—as follows:

This week's "Justice", the Socialist organ, contains the following comments on the Education Bill:—"The Education Bill cannot be said to be acceptable, either by virtue of its principles or by reason of its compromising clauses. This Bill, like its recent Tory predecessors, strikes a blow at the privileged, voluntary, and inefficient system of education, and its inevitable tendency is in the direction of an absolute democratisation of the whole educational machinery of the country, although the clash of warring creeds and the unenlightened selfishness of class interests will confuse the issue, and betray the children's interest as long as they conveniently can. . . . The measure is nothing more or less than a surrender to the canting hypocrisy that admits of lying history books and false lessons in patriotism finding a place in our public (elementary and higher grade) schools today. . . Throughout his speech, delivered with smug urbanity, marked now and then by a little affected passion, Mr. Birrell outlined his proposals, making it clear that he was willing to foist as much 'Christian' theological teaching on the rates as the strife of sects would allow. The child and the teacher appeared to be of least consideration. True, he proposed that religious tests for the latter should be abolished, but so long as teachers are asked to give Biblical instruction, and proclaim the divinity of Christ, they are either being asked to act the hypocrite or are being prevented from carrying out duties they are otherwise fitted for."

This comment also gave rise to a Social Democratic discussion on religion. On Saturday, December 29, 1906, under the heading "The Education Fiasco", I published a complete history of the Bill in *Justice*, and defended Secular Education. It was obvious to me that Secular Education was the only way in the ordinary schools.

During the whole period of my membership, rising out of side approaches only, I was in conflict with the S.D.F. on the religious question. When challenged I stated my philosophic position clearly, although I never obtruded it. Socialism, as I viewed the matter, however mystical or spiritual the Socialist might be in his subjective purpose, and allowing for every possible kind of poetical flight, fundamentally involved Atheism.

As a philosophy of life, Socialism was founded on a materialism which explained all abstract ideas and all institutions in the terms of Mother Earth. To embrace its teachings was to war against every myth from God to the "captain of industry". Certainly it told of a universe of natural law, conditioned by the principles of its own existence, and ruled by no capricious deity whose will was altered by the whim of man.

Officially condemning this view, the party practically avowed its conviction that Socialism was but a reformist legislation. Political opportunism suggested that it was secular and mundane, not atheistic and anti-religious. Such revisionism—both political and philosophical—as this and other official statements of policy pointed to, dissatisfied me. So I left the party, having derived much useful instruction from the publications of the Socialist Labour Party and the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

I had no wish to capture the Socialist platform for Atheist propaganda, but I did not intend to be crippled in my exposition of Socialism. How could one offer it as a substitute for present-day society, without

opposing its every principle to all the institutions of capitalism? If Socialism had no room for God, it had as little space for the Freethinkers' abstract "reason". Here was Socialism—a clear-cut philosophy of materialism—representing the revolt of mother earth against the sky—the social and economic maturity of man as a social animal —being negated for votes by persons who mouthed working-class watchwords today only to eulogise the deeds of capitalist cabinets tomorrow. Here were the essentials of revolutionary propaganda being denied and twisted in order to secure middle-class smiles and smirks for men claiming to be Socialists! But not revolutionary, not too extreme, not so strictly logical as to be above bribery, you know! Poor God! He is the believed of every public and private corruptionist.

Socialism, as I avowed it, did not negate the propaganda or idealism of the first Christians. It did not deny a man's right to use the word "God" as James Russell Lowell used it, or even Emerson. It was not necessarily at war with the essential message of Jesus. I merely claimed my right to appear on the Socialist platform and to urge Socialism as an Atheist. The Socialism was fundamental, not the Atheism, when I stood on the Socialist platform. Everyone had the right to use one's own terms so long as they were intelligible.

4. W. S. CLUSE

The trade of governing has always been monopolised by the most ignorant and the most rascally individuals.

—THOMAS PAINE

When I was in the S.D.F. one of the speakers with me at Clerkenwell Green was W. S. Cluse. I spoke also at Highbury Corner, when Fred Montague, now Lord Amwell, used to speak with us.

Cluse was a very proletarian speaker. and declaimed tremendously against the "boss" class. We met a lot at the Twentieth Century Press (now Marx House, virtually Communist headquarters) on Clerkenwell Green and discussed much with the late Harry Quelch. The Clerkenwell Green meeting was on Sunday morning. The pitch was directly opposite the public house in which, once a week, the branch meeting was held. One great difference between the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. in those days was. that wherever there was a branch of the I.L.P. in London, it met in cafés. Wherever the S.D.F. had to hire a room for meeting, it was always in a public house. Mostly the members drank beer. In the Clerkenwell Branch, I was the only total abstainer. Cluse drank heartily although I never saw him drunk. In a phrase that his comrades used with admiration, he "could carry his beer".

The Sunday morning meeting started at 11 a.m. The aim of Cluse was to end the meeting "as the pub opened". to use another phrase that was almost a platform injunction. Often I was the last speaker, and as I objected to the public house atmosphere and routine, I did not hurry. The opening of the public house tended to close the meeting automatically. Marx was deserted for Bacchus as a matter of course. So I delayed the platform rush to the public-house bar very slightly. It always irked me to see the collection taken and then this descent on the gin-palace as though this was the place to spend the money. There was no dishonesty. The money was kept scrupulously for the cause. The appearance was bad.

In those days, Cluse believed in the citizen army, which is *not* the same as National Service or State Military Conscription. Whether right or wrong, the citizen army idea is *not* militarism in the true sense. I never believed even in the citizen army, but it is not militarism.

Cluse, as I knew him, would not have expected his obituary to be published in the London *Times*, of all papers. He might have thought that a short notice in the *Islington Gazette* or the *Clerkenwell Chronicle* was not out of place. That would have been the extent of his hopes.

After my 1909 imprisonment I lost touch with Cluse for by that time my break with Social Democracy was complete. The course he took during the First World War belied the proletarian aspect of his former propaganda.

There was a fatal contradiction in Social Democratic activity that confused nationalism with internationalism. Social Democracy has no real cosmopolitan internationalism of feeling. It was born of defeat and functioned in the terms of national parliamentarism. There was a logic in Cluse's disgraceful servitude to militarism. It was the logic of anti-Socialism. Imperialism or anti-Socialism is the logic of parliamentarism. It is a treacherous logic. Cluse was willing to pay the price of this logic for social recognition. A like appraisal can be made of Fred Montague, otherwise Lord Amwell. Neither possessed social stamina. Montague refers to himself as an Anarchist member of the House of Lords. He has left the Labour Party and denounces the hypocrisy of its propaganda. It ought not to be forgotten that Lord Amwell used the rungs of the Labour Party ladder in order to climb to the House of Lords. He belonged to the Social Democratic Federation when I joined it and must have been a member of it for about ten years at that time.

The career of Cluse, as his political status was advanced by war and the destruction of humanity, was recorded thus in *The Times*, London, for September 16, 1955:

MR. W. S. CLUSE

Former M.P. for South Islington

Mr. William Sampson Cluse, formerly Labour M.P. for South Islington, who held minor office during the last war, has died in London at the age of 79.

Born on December 20, 1875, he was left an orphan at five years of age and at 11 was working half-time in a baker's shop. After two years he went to a printer and was apprenticed to the trade at the age of 15. His grim experiences in youth early determined political sympathies, and in 1900 he joined the Social Democratic Federation. During the 1914-18 War he served in the R.A.M.C., and on his return was elected in 1919 to the Islington Borough Council. He was elected to Parliament for South Islington in the Labour interest in 1923, and held the seat until 1931. Re-elected in 1935 he retired in 1950. He held minor office in the Coalition Government during the 1939-45 War, as Parliamentary Private Secretary first to the Minister of Transport and then to the Minister of Aircraft Production. In 1942, on his motion, the House of Commons stood in silent protest against the Nazi atrocities against the Jews.

Married in 1902 Alice Louise, daughter of William Warner, and there was a son of the marriage.

All so proper and correct. Thoroughly bourgeois and respectable. Not a whiff of Socialism in the entire set-up. And this is Social Democracy in time of war and crisis. What a terrible campaign of graft and ineptitude Social Democracy proved to be in every country where it flourished! How right I was to leave it! At least I saved my vision.

5. *I BECOME A NON-PARLIAMENTARIAN*

A new form of economic structure will require a new form of political structure.

—KROPOTKIN

The elevation of John Burns to Cabinet rank created quite a tumult of criticism among the Social Democrats. Liberal-Labourism collapsed, and the Labour Party emerged as a factor in British politics. The Social Democrats, opposed to Labour Party affiliation, slowly accepted such affiliation as being the logic of parliamentarism. In some places, the comrades were attached to both the I.L.P. and the S.D.F., although the S.D.F. had less cultural veneer, and was more robustly proletarian in speech and conduct. To this period belongs the story of my associations in Fleet Street.

I was victimised in Fleet Street for refusing to write down a working-class strike in the United States, and declining to attack the fellaheen at Denshawai. Some other Socialist tendencies hastened my passing. I refused to have anything to do with Robert Donald's *Daily Chronicle* flying squad for a Liberal victory at the General Election of 1906, even when the Liberals supported a Social Democrat like Will Thorne.

In May 1906, I fell foul of the Labour Party for its inaction in Parliament. The workers, especially the parliamentarians among them, can look back on the activities of the first two

Labour Governments. They can recall the ceremonial flunkeyism of the Labour Ministers. They can, midst the ruins of a second war, gaze on the marvellous benefits conferred on the European proletariat by the Dawes Report that the Ramsay MacDonald Government put through to please High Financial Interests. They can reflect on 1931 and Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, and J. H. Thomas as Tory leaders, preparing the way for Chamberlain and Churchill. They can consider the calculated hypocrisy and planned careerism of Attlee, who passed from leadership of the Labour Party direct to an earldom. And then they can read the letter I published in *Justice*, the S.D.F. organ, for May 26, 1906:

LABOUR MEN IN PARLIAMENT

Dear Comrade—As the sole reason that animated me in writing "Parliamentary Gossip" was a desire to educate the non-socialists who might read "Justice" may I ask you to publish this letter explaining my reasons for withdrawing from the position of Parliamentary correspondent? The truth is that I am disgusted with the shallowness of the Labour Party's independence; with the waste of time marking the deliberations of the House; the subordination of utility to ornamentalism; and lastly, the nominal outward conformity of Labour members to traditions they are, or should be inwardly opposed to.

Before I studied affairs Parliamentary with that great application I have done since January, I thought there was a great deal of farce in Parliamentary discussion; I now fail to see anything except farce. And if anything was needed to increase my disgust, it was the miserable surrender to "respectable" theological considerations of the Labour Party on the Education Bill's second reading. No decided stand was taken for secular education, and nobody ventured to point out that ornament, and not usefulness, was the main consideration of our present educational system, subjects in themselves ofttime useful being taught regardless of the idiosyncrasy of the child, merely in order that it should be "accomplished".

I may be bigoted and non-politic, but I cannot help thinking that the conventicle plays too large a part in our Labour friends' considerations, and that their return is regarded by them in the light of a "snatch vote" and not as the expression of opinion of an educated proletariat. Accordingly, I think that what comment is necessary is already ably expressed by yourself, and that I might be better employed educating the proletariat outside.

Meanwhile, let me say that both my pen and my abilities as a lecturer are ever at the service of the cause, and that I hope, not infrequently, to contribute in the future to the columns of "Justice", and also to those of the "Social Democrat".

After all, little is to be hoped from Parliament, even though Labour does have its sentiments voiced therein, the only hope of the masses being an educated, class-conscious, militant proletariat.

Yours fraternally,
GUY A. ALDRED

Many years later, after slandering me and attempting to break up my meetings, the parliamentarians realised that I was right in this matter. All the Social Democratic leaders proved to be traitors to the Labour struggle. In their leaders' interests, the Labour rank and file inaugurated a shocking era of violence. Such conduct proved that parliamentarism spells Imperialism. Parliamentarism ends in Empire, Militarism, and Dictatorship, and not in democracy.

My letter was non-parliamentary rather than anti-parliamentary. But I was on the road. I placed Labour Party conferences in the same category as the Liberal and Conservative Parties' confabs. I felt, rightly, that the Labour M.P.'s opportunism was pursued with a view to office. Under these circumstances, Parliament had ceased to interest me. But I was a "non", not "anti". Some would have defined me as not being "a ballot-box maniac", meaning thereby that I had not entirely discarded belief in the ballot-box. My attitude was not quite that of the Socialist Party of Great Britain or political impossibilist, because I believed in struggle and protest, and was inclined to favour a certain amount of economic direct action. I had ceased to believe in palliatives and clung firmly to social revolution. Until the workers mould society it seemed to me that war, crime, and poverty must exist.

This was a full embracement of Richard Carlile's view of all power to the Mechanics' Institute. It was an anticipation of Sovietism and of the view developed by Lenin after the October Revolution of 1917.

CONTENTS

PART V. WITH THE PARLIAMENTARIANS
—Continued

6. R. C. Morrison
page 121

7. Free Speech Discussion
page 122

8. Fred Montague
page 125

9. The Man With the Red Flag
page 128

10. John Burns: Anecdotage
page 133

11. Belfort Bax
page 135

12. General Election, 1906
page 138

13. Social Democracy and The Peerage
page 140

14. Why Attack Religion?
page 141

15. Much Exaggerated
page 143

ILLUSTRATIONS

John Burns: Ramsay MacDonald
page 131

Belfort Bax
page 136

Sir Robert Donald
page 139

Harry Quelch
page 140

PART V. WITH THE PARLIAMENTARIANS—*Contd.*

6. R. C. MORRISON

On the one side is revolution; on the other, counter-revolution.

—BAKUNIN

One man with whom I was most intimate during this S.D.F. period was Robert Craigmyle Morrison. He certainly had no idea then of becoming a peer, just as Cluse never imagined that his obituary notice would one day appear in *The Times*. Morrison spoke a lot for the Walworth S.D.F. in their rooms on Sunday evenings, and at times during the week. I was doing the same. To have suggested that this speaking was the road to the peerage would have caused him to roar with laughter. Such a suggestion would have affected his many London comrades in the same way. Of the entire membership of the S.D.F. in those days, I am inclined to believe that I was the only member who considered that parliamentary Socialism or Social Democracy could lead to a seat in the House of Lords. I was the only member to insist that parliamentarism must end in militarism and opportunist Imperialism. Time has shown that I was right. Morrison took this road. So did Montague. This criticism is not just a passing condemnation of the S.D.F. It indicts completely the philosophy and functioning of Social Democracy.

R. C. Morrison died in a London hospital on December 25, 1953, as Lord Morrison of Tottenham. As R. C. Morrison he was Labour M.P. for North Tottenham from 1922-31 and from 1935-45. He was created a peer in 1946. Thus ended his earlier political play-acting at abolishing the House of Lords.

His activity when I knew him, and his subsequent political career, led up to his peerage. It is a most interesting study in machine organisation, the fallacious slogan of "teamwork" where there is not a team but a gang, and the stupidity of the proletarian mass mind. "Democracy" hates the truth and rejoices in the enslavement of careerism. As though this could be the path of emancipation!

The General Election of 1922 was a vital event in the career of R. C. Morrison precisely because he was a Capitalist politician arrayed in Socialist trimmings. After that election, the Labour Party in Britain published a souvenir of Labour victories, consisting of a work entitled *Labour Personalities in the House of Commons*. The "personalities" mentioned included, duly adorned with a portrait, the following reference to R. C. Morrison (Cooperative) (North Tottenham):

A member of the Management Committee of the London Cooperative Society, also a member of the Middlesex County Council, the Middlesex Education Committee, and the National Union of Teachers. Returned to parliament as a Cooperator, he is also a member of the Labour Party.

In great demand at Cooperative gatherings.

I. Con. 395; N. Lib. 4181; Con. 8392; Coop. 10,250—Maj. 1858.

This notice meant R. C. Morrison, careerist, had gone far since the 1904-6 *Justice* days. He had given much more heed to personal interest than I had done during the intervening period. Whilst I was standing for Socialist principle he had despised the principle in true parliamentary style.

Soon after being elected Labour and Cooperative member for North Tottenham, Morrison organised the school for M.Ps. on parliamentary procedure with H. B. Lees-Smith as teacher. This was a two-fold condemnation of Labour Parliamentarism. The need to be schooled argues an ignorance of procedure that should have been mastered before election to the Commons. The desire to master a special procedure, peculiar to ruling-class tradition, and outwith and beyond the ordinary rules of debate, argues a desire to be subservient to capitalist interests and capitalist institutions. It proves that parliamentarism is impossible as a method of working-class education and organisation. Properly viewed, it establishes beyond doubt

the fact that parliamentarism is Anti-Socialism.

Morrison, however, enjoyed a great reputation as a man who loved the people. He conserved the system that kept them poor and maintained royalty—and a ruling-class.

At 41 Talbot Road, where he lived, he welcomed even revolutionists and alleged intellectuals. His heartiness meant that he did not take the revolutionists seriously. Socialist agitation he liquidated in a parliamentary struggle for power between rival gladiators.

In the 1929 Government he was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Ramsay MacDonald. He shared this office with his fellow Scot and fellow schoolteacher—Lachlan McNeil Weir. The latter was completely subservient to MacDonald until MacDonald himself broke the charmed circle.

Bob Morrison, as the movement and his associates styled him, was abroad when the 1931 crisis broke. MacDonald summoned him home.

"I don't know much about it from this distance," wrote Morrison, "but I gather you are joining the Tories and I am against you."

MacDonald was with the Tories long before 1931 and Morrison, if he had been a Socialist, would have known that fact. Actually, however, parliamentarism itself is Toryism. Parliamentary heresy and regard for Socialist first principles lead to Anti-Parliamentarism. Rigid Parliamentarism spells Imperialism and War.

Morrison was responsible for bringing *Reynolds News* into the ownership of the Co-operative movement. That has not added to the radicalism of the paper, nor has the co-operative ownership enabled the paper to remain, what every Labour paper should be, Social Republican. We need less monarchism and more of the old-time Radical Republicanism to give health to the movement in these dull, dreary days of war, rumours of war, and deadly Imperialism.

It is said that Morrison loved banter. Perhaps it ought to be said that he rejoiced in parliamentary escapism. He was a keen supporter of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club and became its President. His football understanding was probably greater than his knowledge of Socialism. There is no doubt, however, of his popularity in Tottenham. There he was regarded as the friend of politicians and of the poor, alike.

Of such was Social Democracy! A movement of waste, pretence, and failure! But very successful for the individual careerist under capitalism so typified by R. C. Morrison.

During the months of February and March 1906, *Justice* published a correspondence between Morrison and myself on the subject of "Socialism and Free Speech". This correspondence arose out of a lecture delivered by Morrison at the Walworth S.D.F. rooms.

7. FREE SPEECH DISCUSSION

Here's freedom for him that wad read;
Here's freedom for him that wad write;
There's nane ever feared that the truth should be heard
Save him that the truth wad indict.

—BURNS

Morrison objected to criticism offered at one of his meetings by Frank Vickers who was then inclining towards the S.P.G.B.; a small grouping of expelled and resigned members of the S.D.F., founded in 1904 as a political "impossibilist" Social Democratic organisation. Vickers was supported by a man named Gallacher, who was a member of the Brixton National Secular Society who had turned from parliamentary socialism to a kind of individualism, verging on anarchism. I was present at this meeting where the row took place and challenged Morrison on his attitude.

Vickers later joined the S.P.G.B. and as a member of that party debated with me in Hyde Park. Later still, he joined the Communist Party but left it within a short period. Well-read and possessed of a keen mind, Frank Vickers was an eager seeker after truth.

When I left London I lost touch with Frank Vickers and his friend Gallacher. From time

to time, I would hear of them and their activities but gradually I heard no more and I do not know today if they are still in the land of the living. After I left the S.D.F., on the rare occasions when I had not a meeting of my own to attend, Vickers and I would go together to the Chandos Hall meetings of the S.D.F. At these meetings we enjoyed much propaganda and argumentative fun.

Morrison did not forget the Walworth days. A year before his death, he wrote to me. Considering the strong differences between us in regard to war and socialism, it was a friendly letter. He had some idea of visiting Glasgow and he thought it would be good to recall the old days when I was tramping all over London raising the banner of Social Democracy. His letter brought back many a memory of that active time. I recalled the meetings at Ewell, where the local paper always made a good report, one of which had described me as "the youngest orator in the Socialist movement"; and Gillingham, which was a regular meeting place. Here I was the guest of a comrade named Taylor, a photographer by profession. I recall the memory of his wife who died under tragic circumstances in London. Her death made a big headline sensation. This notice was cut out and kept by me but when my first imprisonment came, most of my personal papers were lost and as a result many an interesting and sometimes exciting meeting that had been reported, was forgotten. It needed, however, but a word from someone to bring flooding back a host of memories. Morrison's letter to me did this.

The difference of approach between R. C. Morrison and myself can be judged by the *Justice* correspondence:

Justice, London, was the weekly organ of the Social Democratic Federation. Actual date of each issue of the paper in which it was published appears above each letter.

Saturday, February 17, 1906

Sir—At a time when we are concerned with the cowardly tactics of the Radicals at Camborne, it is well, perhaps, that we should sit in judgment on ourselves. The present letter is neither an attack on the policy of the S.D.F. nor on any particular branch or active comrades in the cause of progress and working-class emancipation. But recently the present writer has been attending the debates held in connection with one of the most advanced, most progressive, and most efficient of the London branches of our organisation. On one occasion it dealt with the relationship between Emersonian philosophy and Socialism, on another with the basis of Social Democracy, and on a third with Socialism made easy. On each occasion I took occasion to differ from the lecturer, differing from the comrade who lectured upon the "Basis of Social Democracy" upon the question of the ethical basis of its economics, and with the third lecture upon the question of "State v. Scientific Socialism", my attitude upon this question corresponding with that of Hyndman and other leaders in our movement. During these discussions there have been present some of my secularist friends, who, in my opinion, have indulged in metaphysical sophistry. In theirs, however, they hold that they are quite sincere and honest. Nevertheless, my questions have not been answered, I have been accused of giving the lead to individualistic quibbling, and informed that elementary Socialistic lectures did not take into account the scientific side of the subject. For my part, I hold that Socialism is essentially scientific and that we should not convert our economics into a faith we are not prepared to defend, or into a religion, the essential note of which is bigotry and dogmatism. Yet I must confess Socialists are too prone to do this, and I, therefore, appeal to my comrades to give a fair hearing to what they consider to be the "arrant nonsense" of the opposition, and to remember that before their conversion possibly Socialism was "arrant nonsense" to them. We know what persecution is, let us therefore, in the name of the liberty for which we strive, not seek to prevent the propagation of ideas and the freedom of speech for which our forefathers fought.—Yours fraternally,

GUY A. ALDRED

Saturday, February 24, 1906

Dear Comrade—As one who took part in preventing the freedom of speech complained of by comrade Guy A. Aldred in last week's *Justice*, and as the reputation of our branch may suffer if no reply is made, perhaps you will allow me to explain. The Southwark branch have been holding a series of Sunday evening propaganda lectures (not debates, as comrade Aldred says). A large proportion of our audiences are beginners. Such an occasion was clearly not the time to indulge in a discussion as to the merits of any particular school of Socialist thought. All that I was

concerned about was to make clear the root principle upon which all Socialists are agreed —viz., that the means of life should be owned and controlled by the whole people. Therefore I refused to be drawn because I coula foresee that the result would be much the same as it had been on previous Sundays, the effect of the lecture would be nullified, and most of the audience would have gone home dazed and bewildered, and wondering what it had all been about. Now, as regards the secularist friends who were also "closured". That their questions were either sincere or honest I do not believe, because while I was speaking they paid little or no attention, but sat laughing and talking, so much so that comrade Aldred himself had to rebuke them, and comrade Mrs. Spackman, who was in the chair, informed me afterwards that she was several times on the point of asking them either to keep order or to leave the meeting. Now I submit that it would have been a flagrant abuse of the privilege of free speech to have allowed these individuals, as unfortunately they had been allowed on previous occasions, to practically monopolise both questions and discussion with their "metaphysical sophistry". The relief of our sorely-tried audience at the attitude I took up, could be almost felt, and was well-expressed in joyful tones by comrade Sims of Bermondsey Branch. In conclusion, the Southwark S.D.F. are out to make Socialists; they are no respecters of persons; all metaphysical sophists, individualistic quibblers, and dialectic jugglers they treat with scant ceremony. And just because of that, the cause of Social Democracy is making rapid progress in Southwark.—Yours fraternally,

—ROBT. C. MORRISON

P.S.—Speaking in Regent's Park for Kentish Town Branch on the morning of the same day, I answered 15 questions put in succession by one of the audience. Not much limitation of free speech about that!—R.C.M.

Sir—I am in entire agreement with your valued correspondent, Mr. Guy A. Aldred, in urging Socialist lecturers in addressing their own comrades. (and incidentally one or two "strangers to the faith" who may attend indoor lectures) to go a little *beyond* the elementary *à la* "Britain for the British" Socialism and occasionally deal with the matter from a scientific standpoint. I, myself, have this winter "done" nearly all the halls, and have been surprised to find very few "popular lecturers" who can handle the subject scientifically.

Why cannot comrade Quelch take some of these gentlemen in hand, say once a week, and polish them up a bit. It would be an education to the speakers themselves and a real boon to the intelligent Socialist auditor.

Yours fraternally,

FREDERICK HOWARD

Saturday, March 3, 1906

THE RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH

Dear Comrade—As comrade Morrison has introduced personal particulars which I excluded as being irrelevant to the moral of my letter, I should be extremely grateful if you would allow me to correct his statements in a controversy in which I do not seek the last word. Having been allowed to do this, I shall not trespass further on your valuable space in reference to this dispute. In the first place, as one who has twice addressed the Sunday evening meeting of the Southwark Branch during the present year, allow me to state that open discussion and questions have always followed the lecture. And I suppose, when a lecturer asks for open discussion, he does not mean open so far as he is capable of answering it, but open so long and so far as it is relevant to the nature of the lecture. I come now to comrade Morrison's lecture. "Socialism Made Easy". "Such an occasion," he says, "was clearly not the time to indulge in a discussion as to the merits of any particular school of Socialist thought." But nobody sought to raise such a discussion, least of all the present writer, who has time after time clearly defined the attitude of the various schools of Socialist thought, and shown that the most practicable and consistent is that adopted by the S.D.F. The only question I asked referred to the question of State Socialism and majority rule as opposed to scientific Socialism. And as the speaker did not distinguish between the two, but seemed to be under the impression that both were the same, I urged upon him the need to draw a distinction. In this I should have received the hearty support of comrade Hyndman had he been present. But comrade Morrison twitted me with thinking for myself, and refused to answer. So much for his free speech. To say that on the same morning he answered a number of questions elsewhere is no reply. A practical adherence to the right

of free speech is not shown by the number of questions answered, but in the manner of answering questions. And that spirit is shown by too few Socialists. Many a lecturer will apply an adjective to some politician, which he has culled from the current *Justice,* and not understand its reference. It is against this spirit that I war. And but for the questions asked by those who differed from me, many a lecture of mine would have fallen flat. Lecturers are not infallible, and there is no reason why Socialists should fear free speech. A scheme of social economy which can withstand the dialectical skill of a Bradlaugh and a G. W. Foote, does not need to be degraded into an ecclesiastical dogma. Essentially scientific, it will gain more by the establishment than by the suppression of free speech; and if I thought it did not, I should not be a Socialist. For the rest, the fact that some of the most active members of the Southwark Branch endorse the attitude that I have taken up on this question is my all-sufficient justification.—Yours fraternally,

GUY A. ALDRED

Saturday, March 20, 1906

FREE SPEECH

Dear Comrade—As comrade Aldred has generously allowed me the last word in this controversy, at least so far as he and I are concerned, I shall not abuse his generosity, but will be brief. Comrade Aldred has stated his case very clearly in his two letters; but, nevertheless, I am still of the same opinion—namely, that it is the duty of a speaker to see that his lecture is not side-tracked, and to refuse to be drawn into any discussion on a minor issue not immediately connected with his lecture, if he thinks there is a danger that the main points he has made will be lost sight of by so doing. If I have offended comrade Aldred by my action, I am sorry; but, under similar circumstances, I should again act in the same way. Our comrade is a hard worker for Socialism; his "Parliamentary Gossip" is bright and interesting, and probably as he gets a little older and gains more experience in the movement he may alter his opinion; for, after all, in these matters to quote Rousseau's words, "Experience is the best schoolmaster".—Fraternally yours,

ROBT. C. MORRISON

I do not think that age or experience proved very useful as a Socialist schoolmaster in the case of R. C. Morrison. Indeed, I would say that the end established beyond all doubt that he never attended any Socialist school.

8. FRED MONTAGUE

European experience shows that the parliamentary system is not satisfactory.

—BAKUNIN

Hailing roughly from the same district as R. C. Morrison, and closely associated with him in North London propaganda, was Fred Montague. Both persons afterwards demonstrated how natural it was for a Social Democrat to become a Capitalist Imperialist and war-monger. Both ended up in the House of Lords, where Montague still sits as Lord Amwell, having discovered that Labourism is no longer exactly true. All this never occurred to him whilst he was pursuing his mediocre careerist path. During my activity in Clerkenwell I came in contact with Morrison, more on the South side of London than the North. For some reason he was very much admired by the Walworth branch of the S.D.F. Montague I ran against mostly in North London. If I relate the careers of these people as I came in contact with them, and so seem to go beyond the time element of my story, the fact is understandable and the result quite interesting. It shows that my first impressions were right and it traces the evolution of my environment. It explains the soil in which I developed as well as traces my own growth. Of actual growth there was not much. It was the fact of the rightness of my first conclusions in relation to parliamentary aspirations, careerism, and opportunism that was demonstrated. Instinctively I was a Socialist. Education and experience never made Socialists out of my contemporaries in the S.D.F.

At the time of my joining the S.D.F., John Burns was the subject of bitter denunciation by the Social Democrats for becoming a

Cabinet Minister and attending Royal levees. Today. it is known that Burns defined and anticipated the careerist ineptitude of Social Democracy. By its nature and organisation, and despite all its street-corner loudmouthness, Social Democracy is anti-Socialist organisation. It has no idea of working-class struggle and is pledged to defend the capitalist state.

Whether the Social Democrat is an avowed opportunist or pretends to be a revolutionary, his attitude towards revolutionary struggle is the same.

It took Montague a very long time to realise this truth for he joined the Social Democrats in 1894, ten years before I did. I reached the conclusion of Social-Democratic ineptitude within a year of joining the S.D.F. I realised rapidly that parliamentarism was not the way.

I do not claim that I am more able than the charlatan Labour leaders and Social Democrats. I had the insight of honesty. I realised that parliamentarians are careerists and have no vision. That is why they have been pandering down the years.

In those days, Montague spoke often from the S.D.F. platform in Finsbury Park. Jack Webb, who died some years ago, used to speak from the same platform. Webb was a rough diamond in the true sense. The contrast he offered to Montague was amazing. Montague was a well-spoken, likeable type of platform speaker. Webb was rude, crude, and revolting. Yet he spoke sincerely and truthfully. I also spoke on this platform and when all three speakers followed each other, there was a great contrast.

As evidence of its capitalist constitutionalism, the *Socialist Standard*, organ of the S.P.G.B., in its issue for February 1956, reproduced, *with permission*, from the *Daily Mail* for December 16, 1955, an article by Lord Amwell, entitled *Why I Quit the Labour Party*. To me, it seems that he chose a nice time to quit, after he had got as far in politics as he could.

Since Montague made such a belated confession in the columns of the *Daily Mail* he might have advised his readers that I had anticipated his denunciations of the Labour Party, to his knowledge, fifty years before.

The S.P.G.B. patting him on the back today reminds me that Montague was not afraid to "cross swords" with the S.P.G.B. through the medium of the *Socialist Standard*. He was quite sound on economics and often scored. I went one better than Montague and met Fitzgerald, of the S.P.G.B., in debate, in Bermondsey in 1906.

Montague used to speak also at Highbury Corner, Islington, at the same time as I did, during this period that we were both in the S.D.F. He was born in Clerkenwell, like myself, but is ten years older that I am. He was born in 1876.

I never associated much with Montague. The man did not like me. I saw through him and his colleagues.

Montague's biography in *Who's Who* for 1947 (before be became Baron Amwell) reveals the man's outlook. This states:

MONTAGUE, Frederick, C.B.E. 1946; M.P. (Lab.) West Islington, Dec. 1923-31, and since 1935; b. Clerkenwell, London, 1876. . . . Self-educated. Newsboy; shop-assistant; free-lance journalist; with leading London Agencies as advertisement copy-writer; Parliamentary Agent, Labour Party; Political Organiser; joined 18th Bn. (S.) K.R.R.C., 1915; served France and Belgium; commissioned 1917; served Egypt and Palestine; Egyptian Military Schools (full Lieut.; teacher Commercial Subjects); Under-Secretary of State for Air, 1929-31; Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Transport, 1940-41; Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Aircraft Production, 1941-42; Alderman Islington Borough Council, 1919-25.

I do not think that this reads much like the record of a Socialist. It is a record of a man seeking to secure a career through parliamentarism and willing and anxious to find a place in the sun under capitalism. The entire thinking is capitalist thinking—militarism, servitude, snobbery.

His Social Democratic associations are forgotten; yet it was his Social Democratic activity and platform work that enabled him to get where he is today.

He forgets something else that those of us who lived in Clerkenwell or Islington and were in the S.D.F. in 1904 or thereabouts remember. Fenner Brockway, in his *Inside the Left*, 1938, writes (page 26):

Fred Montague, afterwards Under-Secretary for Air in the Government of 1929-31, was down on his luck in those days, selling a healing ointment in various London markets; previously he had been a very able full-time propagandist on one of the vans run by the "Clarion".

No mention of the ointment episode appears in *Who's Who*. It would have been so crude to recall this fact!

Brockway's reference, combined with the *Who's Who* account, means that Montague

was prepared to do anything and say anything in order to advance his position.

The *Socialist Standard* also ignores this feature of Montague's activity, and heads its article:

LORD AMWELL AND THE LABOUR PARTY

Pointed Criticism by Early Member of the S.D.F.

Surely, however, Amwell had forgotten, long since, to think as a member of the S.D.F. Bad as that organisation was potentially, it did not believe, at the time of my membership, in its members becoming Ministers of the Crown and upholding capitalist war. Its great campaign against John Burns was that he became a Cabinet Minister and the S.D.F.-ers, including Montague, circulated the pamphlet: *Judas Iscariot! John Burns' Verdict on Himself.*

Strangely enough, when Montague and his colleagues deserted Social Democracy to become militarists and murderers, John Burns took a hold of himself and proudly returned to obscurity and Socialist Anti-Militarism. He was never the renegade that the Labour Party upholders rejoiced in becoming.

The Editorial Committee of the S.P.G.B. introduced Montague's statement with this strange uncritical comment:

It is of more than passing interest because Frederick Montague, besides having been Labour M.P. and having held office in the Labour Government, was a member of the Social Democratic Federation at the time members broke away to form the S.P.G.B. in 1904. He had joined the S.D.F in 1894 and the I.L.P. in 1895 (dual membership being quite an accepted thing at that time) and later became a member of the Labour Party. The S D.F. which after some changes of name, had reverted to its earlier name, lost membership and influence and disappeared early in the second world war. In 1939, the last year in which it appeared among the organisations affiliated to the Labour Party (with a membership reduced to 500) Fred Montague was their delegate at the Labour Party Conference.

All this gives interest to Lord Amwell's reason for leaving the party that he has supported for so long. Many of the points he makes are in line with S.P.G.B. arguments.

Then we have the *Daily Mail* account of Amwell's career, actually culled from *Who's Who:*

One-time newsboy and shop assistant, Lord Amwell, Frederick Montague as he then was, sat as Labour M.P. for West Islington from 1923 to 1931 and from 1935 to 1947. He was Under-Secretary of State for Air, 1929-31; Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport, 1940-41; and Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Aircraft Production, 1941-42. He was created Baron in 1947.

Then follows the article.

WHY I QUIT THE LABOUR PARTY

I quit, but not to cross any floor, only to be free. I want freedom to say without embarrassment that which I feel ought to be said about today's labour politics and industrial tactics.

Clement Attlee's departure provides the occasion by loosening certain ties of personal loyalty.

Labour was never very clear in its Socialist theory but I, for one, hoped for the best. Today's attempt at "refashioning Socialism as a philosophy and finding practical programmes to meet the needs of the times" has resulted in grounding the principles by which the movement was originally inspired. Such is my view and here are some of my reasons for holding it.

"Welfare" has nothing whatsoever to do with Socialism, and constitutes no "silent revolution". It did not originate with the Labour Party and was not opposed by any pai ty. It is not a party issue. That "rascally" Tories voted against the Welfare State is not true. Naturally Tories wanted their own way on details, but they no more voted against the principle than Labour voted against having an Army, Navy, and Air Force.

It is a little disgusting to mislead electors by taking advantage of popular ignorance of Parliamentary procedure in the interest of vote-catching.

I have no objection to "Welfare". We live in a keen Capitalist world that must be allowed to work or we starve. But I do object to the substitution of it for what we are supposed to stand for and the consequent neglect of more fundamental things. Especially do I object to calling the Beveridge system Socialist and claiming fundamental change for it, silent or not.

It is not true that "poverty has been wiped out in Britain for ever", as Attlee told the Russians. The authoritative figure of persons in receipt of public assistance is 1,600,000. These are not all old persons

The fact is that "Welfare" implies the continued existence of the inherited and the disinherited—Disraeli's "Two Nations". It is made a substitute for Socialism on the ground that it involves a redistribution of national income—the alleged silent revolution. But Socialism is not the redistribution of money income. It is production for use and the distribution of that. . .

Labour in face of tremendous problems seems to me to be playing the old unclean party game. peddling for votes on the "Ninepence for fourpence" and "Big loaf instead of little loaf" pattern. I have no use for it. I think the propaganda of Transport House shocking in its mendacity and its appeal to cupidity. Not thus was a loveable movement made.

I want also to show that social reform in history has always been a process of "tidying up" when the cruder forms of exploitation have ceased to pay. There is no exception to this, and it makes a big difference once understood, to what we think about fundamentals and expediencies.

So, I quit!

I agree with every word of this article. Everything that Fred Montague writes is true. Why did he wait till he became a peer to say it? Did he not arrive at this eminence by *misleading* the electors? Did not the shocking propaganda of Transport House assist him in reaching his present position? The pill-seller in the markets of North London became the peer at Westminster—by the assistance of Transport House! He took his dope to the right market. Is that not so?

9. THE MAN WITH THE RED FLAG

Whatever charity we owe to men's persons, we owe none to their errors.

—BISHOP BURNETT

Parliament has no place for the man with the Red Flag. Constitutionally, it does not recognise and cannot tolerate him. By the very act of taking his seat in the capitalist assembly, the erstwhile Socialist betrays the workers' cause. All that follows in the way of speaking and voting against the class from whose ranks he has risen, is natural and inevitable. The history of parliamentarism from 1884 to 1956—the period commencing with John Burns, the Trafalgar Square orator, and ending with the elevation to an Earldom of Clement Attlee—demonstrates this truth. In the interval there was the sorry masquerade of the Rt. Hon. James Ramsay MacDonald, the first Labour Prime Minister of Great Britain.

I reached the understanding of this truth in 1906. Writing fifty years later I am impelled to move forward to draw on the facts upholding my 1906 conclusions. The opinion was formed in 1906. The organised Labour movement was far behind me in understanding.

It is characteristic of parliamentarism that it should engage the workers in the impossible task of discovering honest representatives to play at capitalist legislation, instead of addressing itself to the Socialist education of the masses. For many years it intrigued the workers with the entertaining theory that Keir Hardie with his cloth cap and purple comforter was symbolical of the honest man in parliament. In 1906, I began to contest this idea and later wrote a denunciation of the Socialist worship of the dead. I shall come to this essay later. Here also I was right and the so-called movement was wrong.

Social Democracy could not forgive John Burns when he entered the Liberal Cabinet in 1905, and assumed Court Dress a year later. But when Ramsay MacDonald became Labour Premier and assumed Court Dress in 1924 it was obvious that the Keir Hardie tradition was an idle conceit. The Ramsay MacDonald of 1924 was as great a contrast to the Keir Hardie of 1892 as the John Burns of 1905. He wore Court Dress to as little proletarian purpose. But he demonstrated with the consent of Keir Hardie's disciples, that the cloth cap and purple comforter were inconsistent with successful parliamentarism. The irony that the Labour Parliamentarians applied to Burns, arrayed in his Court bravery in 1905, applied to the entire Labour Government of nineteen years after: "All for the Cause!"!! It applies today when Anti-Socialist public schoolboy Hugh Gaitskell heads the Labour Parliamentarians.

Which means that from 1892 to 1914, when the war collapsed the Labour movement, parliamentarism, posing as Socialism, but working to preserve capitalism and monarchism, "agitated" the working class over the distressful difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee!

Keir Hardie and John Burns were returned to parliament at the General Election of 1892. Hardie held that it was the duty of the Labour Party in the House always to sit in opposition, until they were strong enough to form a Labour Government! Burns held that the Labour Party might as well sit on the Liberal benches. One meant a Court Dress in 1905 and the other in 1924! And instead of Labour agreeing to call itself "Liberalism", the "Liberals" would agree to Labourism! Either way, Socialism was permeated out of existence. Yet an entire literature and an enthusiastic, but cheated, movement was founded on this petty squabble of personal interest, that substituted a pretended parliamentary issue of great moment for the actual combatting of social wrong and the overthrow of class society.

Parliamentarism is the perpetual deception of the proletariat. When one "honest" representative finally abandons the proletarian view of poverty, its cause and cure, another parliamentarian rises from the streets, and renews the workers' hopes of securing something from Westminster. Once more they are excited by nothing better than false expectations: for the agitator remains true to labour only so long as he shares the workers' lot and preserves the workers' outlook. He cannot solve labour's problem by developing into a capitalist careerist. And that is all that becoming practical and developing a "responsible" outlook means.

In 1884, two years before my birth, John Burns blossomed into fame because the workers were disappointed with the notorious Liberal-Labour men of the time. In contra-distinction to these, Burns expressed boldly and bluntly the opinion of the man working in a factory, because, after all, he was still working in the factory. All he said was vitiated, as it was subsequently to be denied, by his parliamentary ambitions. His fellow-workers, hearing him express their outlook, and not understanding the fatal nullifying logic of parliamentarism, looked upon him as a champion, unconditioned by circumstance. Ignorance of the law of interest, and its effect on vision, is the basis of parliamentary illusion.

In June 1884, John Burns attended, as an opponent, a meeting held in favour of emigration, at the Kensington Vestry Hall. Amid interruptions and cries of "shame", he declared that the real reason why the titled and wealthy people on the platform wanted to ship off the people was because they were afraid of social revolution.

Burns was of the same mind in February 1886, when, at the London King's College Conference on Emigration, he declared that the only emigration he could support, would be the emigration of two-thirds of the population of the West-End, the people who jeered at the poverty of the workers.

The same John Burns, but now a Cabinet Minister, speaking in the House of Commons, on May 30, 1906, declared that every effort made to train men for migration or emigration had his energetic sympathy.

That year I left the S.D.F. because I could not tolerate its parliamentary opportunism. Was I not right? In due course, hating my virile Socialist platform activity, Labour became His Majesty's Government in 1924. Like John Burns, it supported emigration, which its members had opposed formerly. It can be seen that the substitution of emigration for Socialism as a "cure" for poverty, expressed the logic and the dismal failure of parliamentarism.

Writing in *Justice* for July 12, 1884, on "Our Mining Population", John Burns described the miners' calling as *"one that necessitates a robust constitution, but the starvation rate of wage precludes the possibility of a good physique . . . the marvel is that so much sobriety and intelligence is possible under such depressing conditions."*

He contrasted the lot of these *"simply profit-making machines to build up large fortunes for the mine-owner"*, with the latter's lot *"luxuriating on the shores of the Mediterranean, or gliding up the Bosphorus in a steam yacht, purchased out of the unpaid labour of the miners."*

In September 1884, Burns criticised severely the 17th sitting of the Trade Union Congress. The constituents of the congress were the wealth producers of Great Britain, who wished it to function as a Labour Parliament. He doubted if it would even discuss the question of unemployment. He objected to the congress being praised for its moderation by the capitalists as a sure sign of its impotence. Its service to the workers was measured by capitalist disapprobation. To accept and rejoice in congratulations from non-producers was to countenance the existing state of society.

"In all our coal and iron districts," declared Burns, giving point to this denunciation, "the same cry is heard 'no work to be got'; and what is worse, where work is going, it is at starvation wages."

During 1905 and 1906, I applied Burns' sound test. I saw then, as I see today, that it condemns all parliamentarism, all this "Socialism" to which "Europe"—that is European Capitalism—turned in 1956.

In *Justice* for January 24, 1885, Burns published "An Open Letter to Trade Unionists", describing, with great eloquence, the lot of the unemployed. They are subject to every indignity peculiar to poverty, outcasts of civilisation, spurned by the creatures for whom they have over-produced. He concludes "that the industrial life of today is such as to necessitate a complete revolution."

Burns adds:

"Palliatives are useless; these symptoms that we witness today are but the inevitable outcome of the disease that society has suffered from since commercialism has held its sway. The remedy is not to be found in smooth words, or plausible transitory panaceas from the owning classes. It can only be secured by the workers demanding their full share of the wealth they produce, and insisting upon their rights to live like men and be citizens of an industrial commonwealth."

Keir Hardie delivered his maiden speech in Parliament on Tuesday, February 7, 1893, in moving an amendment to the address on the unemployed question. He declared that his

amendment was intended as a vote of censure on the Government because any government that ignored unemployment was unworthy of public confidence.

The day before the unemployed demonstrated near Westminster and were batoned by the police. This synchronised with the royal opening of parliament and so gave point to Hardie's amendment. Their fate did not trouble Burns, who had made his name during the previous decade, organising the unemployed. A year later he declared that if he had been present when the amendment was moved he would have voted against it, as Hardie exaggerated the number out of work.

This was a scandalous suggestion but then it is only in the same category as the indifference to this question of the Labour Government of 1924, and the partiality of its members for royal dining and wining whilst the workers starved. The clever paraphrase that ironically summed up Burns's indifference applies to every parliamentarian.

"John Burns is in Parliament,
All's right with the world."

But Burns excused his inaction with sound Socialist reasoning that destroyed entirely the case for all parliamentarism:

"I do not believe in building cruisers in order to find work for unemployed labourers and navvies, or for engineers and shipwrights, even if I had a shipyard in my constituency. Further, as a Socialist, I am, as I have ever been, against Labour Colonies, Municipal Workshops, and such economic nostrums as find favour with fledgling economists of the S.D.F., and the embryonic statesmen of the I.L.P."

If this condemned Hardie for agitating in Parliament, it condemned Burns for sitting there.

Burns still denounced thrift. Speaking at the Trade Union Congress, in September 1894, he declared that thrift was invented by capitalist rogues to deprive honest fools of their due, and commercial enterprise, like patriotism, was too often the last resort of commercial vultures like Jabez Balfour and American millionaires.

Obviously, this was the same John Burns, as attended the Industrial Remuneration Conference, held at Princes Hall, London, on January 28, 29, and 30, 1885, to discuss the best way of establishing more equitable relations between Capital and Labour. On the very first day, Burns, in aggressive mood, told the conference that working men had not much time to study politeness, and that it was impossible for the father of a family to be thrifty.

Successful parliamentarism, however, requires the preaching of thrift to the working class. The Parliamentarians did so during the First World War, and later, whilst members of the Labour Government—that is, at a time when they, personally, were spending at a rate that must have been princely compared with their spending power whilst working in the mine and factory. This fact justifies me not being surprised when the Rt. Hon. John Burns, speaking in the House of Commons, on May 30, 1906, substituted thrift for Socialism. He declared that it was necessary to encourage thrift amongst the workers, to see that they did not mis-spend their wages, or divert them to less worthy ends than the donation or unemployed benefit funds!

I turn back to the Industrial Remuneration Conference to discover how Burns acquired the power to insult the workers in this way. On the third day, John Burns declared that there was no freedom for the workers so long as wage-slavery existed, and told how he had lost his job for attending the Conference as a Social Democratic delegate. He denounced profit-sharing as a delusive bait to goad the workers on to greater intensity of toil, and saw a revolution *"germinating in the bowels of society through the inequalities of condition which prevailed."* Burns ridiculed the idea that capital could be moralised by education, for the capitalist developed and prostituted education against the interest of the worker.

"Moralise capital!" he exclaimed in scornful query. "You might as well attempt to moralise the boa-constrictor that had its coils around the body of its victim. Could you moralise the retired capitalist out of his 300 square miles of deer forest, or out of his steam yacht, or out of the guinea orchid he wore in his button-hole?"

The logic of this speech is as powerful today as when Burns delivered it in 1885. Fundamentally, nothing has altered except the social standing of the parliamentary representative. Burns retired from public life, and Ramsay MacDonald succeeded to his public importance. The parliamentarism of the one failed as completely to alter the terms of the case put forward as the parliamentarism of the other. The masses applauded

Burns in 1885, because his statement was apt and true. It remains apt and true. As such, it is the unanswerable case for social revolution. Which means Anti-Parliamentarism.

"Our Position" was an excellent essay which John Burns contributed to *Justice* for November 13, 1886. It denounced powerfully organised religion, tawdry patriotism, and police repression. It declared that the revolution was irresistible and inevitable. And it contained this classic condemnation of *ALL* Labour Parliamentarians:

"Politicians have promised reforms without end, and the result of all their palaver is the present hopeless condition of the people. Theirs the sweets of office and £5,000 a year; for the workers, the gall and wormwood of an impoverished life and a premature grave."

In this article. Burns impeached "the fawning attitude of the Shiptons, the Potters, and the Burnetts, who dance attendance at Sandringham upon the Prince of Wales, to thank him and his flunkeys" as "fraudulent panderers to royalty" who begged charity "instead of helping to remove the causes that render it possible for princes to exist and honest men to starve".

A week later, at Trafalgar Square, he again denounced them by name, to the cheers of the assembled workers, for *"dining that day off the game which was presented to them last week at Sandringham by the Prince of outdoor relief paupers, Albert Edward."*

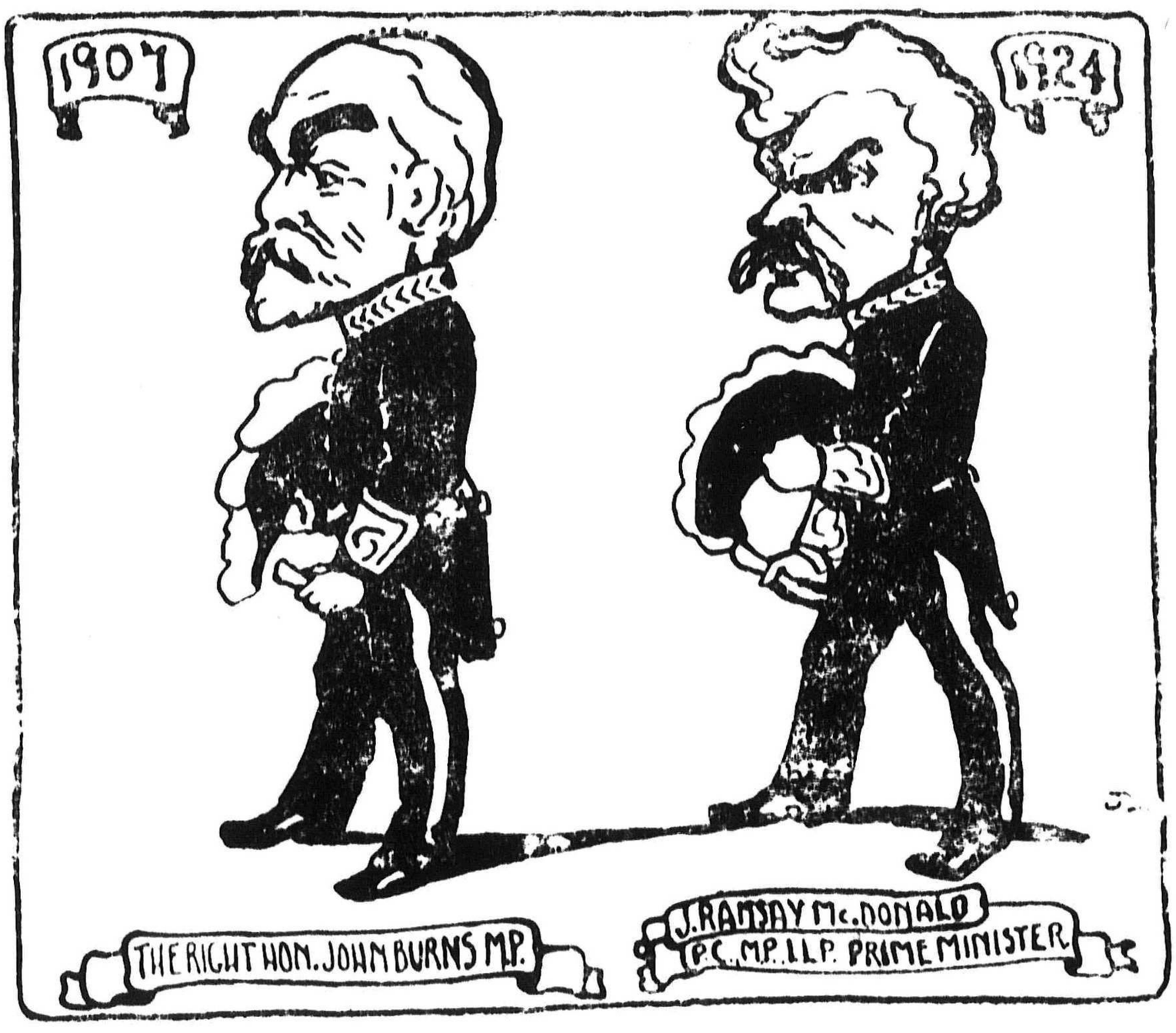
At this meeting, Burns moved a resolution that was carried with acclamation, repudiating *"the representative character assumed by the traitors of Labour who have betrayed the rights of Labour by thanking the Prince for charity instead of demanding justice for the workers."*

He then waved the red flag and called for three cheers for the social revolution.

Burns went the same way as the Shiptons, the Potters, and the Burnetts. His criticism of them afterwards applied with considerable force to himself. On November 13, 1906, he was present, with a host of Princes, Dukes, Earls, Lords, Bishops, Generals, at a State banquet given in honour of the King and Queen of Norway. On January 28, 1907, he dined with the Royal Family at Windsor Castle. On Saturday, February 23, he was present, with the Dukes of Argyll and Buccleuch, at a large dinner party given by King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace. Four months later, he was in attendance with other Cabinet Ministers at the final levee of "the season" at St. James's Palace.

In 1907, the Labour Parliamentarians contrasted the Burns of 1907 with the Burns of 1886. Fifteen years later, these same parliamentarians were falling over each other to be present at the wedding of the grand-daughter of Edward VII at Westminster Abbey, as part of the 2,000 selected persons admitted to the Abbey. The following year they were dining with Viscount and Viscountess Astor, at a dinner given to King George V and Queen Mary, at which all manner and degree of Lords and Ladies, and capitalist commoners were present. And Ramsay MacDonald, without waiting to become either a Privy Councillor or a Cabinet Minister, was dining with the King.

Of course these people could not criticise the John Burns of 1907 any further. With that renegade, they were opposed only to the John Burns of 1886 to the agitator and proletarian.



If Burns was right in objecting to Shipton, Potter, and Burnett dining with the Prince of Wales in 1886; if the Labour Parliamentarians were right in objecting to Burns dining with the same Prince, then Edward VII, in 1906; I was right in leaving the S.D.F. in 1906, and entering upon a campaign which has continued down the years, of objecting to Labour leaders dining with royalty as a necessary expression of parliamentarism.

Dining with royalty is inseparable from parliamentarism and that "Socialism by Evolution" program which Ramsay MacDonald applauded in his chairman's address to the 1907 Annual Conference of the Independent Labour Party at Derby. It is opposed to the class instinct and feeling of the working class. That is shown by the workers' approval of Burns in 1885 and their enthusiasm, later, for those who denounced him as "Judas Iscariot". Parliament is the counter-revolution and must tend to negate working-class outlook and interests. It can never express or serve them.

I have seen parliamentarism negate Socialism for capitalist thrift and emigration. I have watched it transform Socialism into the watchdog of hereditary institutions.

Speaking in Battersea Park, in June 1892, John Burns declared himself a Republican. Interviewed by the *Idler*, the following January, he emphasised his opposition to throne and altar and his belief in a Workers' Industrial Republic. At the General Elections of 1892, 1895, 1900, and 1906, his Parliamentary Election Address to the Battersea Electors contained the following paragraph:

"As a candidate, dealing with immediate questions, and asking your votes, I am in favour of the following: 'Abolition of the House of Lords and ALL Hereditary Institutions.'"

Having become a Cabinet Minister in 1905, Burns explained at his election meetings in January 1906 that this declaration did not mean the abolition of the monarchy, but only of the House of Lords! Now Attlee says it no longer means the abolition of the House of Lords.

At the beginning of July 1907, Arthur Henderson, on behalf of the Labour Party, proposed to abolish the House of Lords as an irresponsible Chamber. The Rt. Hon. John Burns voted against this proposal!

Subsequently, Arthur Henderson proved that Burns's retrogression on the matter of hereditary authority was the logic of parliamentarism, its natural and inevitable consequence. Henderson took the same Privy Councillors' oath as Burns; served in a war cabinet that even Burns refused to serve in; and later became Home Secretary in a Labour Cabinet that created "Labour Lords", under a Premier who declared that he did not intend to attack the House of Lords!

In 1893, because it was the thing to say to mislead the masses into supporting him, John Burns declared with vehemence:

"I have not the slightest desire for office. It is for me to give hostages to disinterestedness. . . . My only way is by teaching and preaching, and convincing the people that hunting for the loaves which one denounces in other people has no charm for oneself. I would sooner be 'plain John Burns' than the 'Rt. Hon. John Burns, Premier of England'. . . . The fishes of office often stink. I don't want money or office either. Office! I am prouder of my present office—Judge Advocate of the poor—than I should be of the premiership itself. . . . The conviction is born in them that I am after neither office nor money, and they trust me."

These brave words thrilled the people, because the logic of labour's class-consciousness of wrong is anti-parliamentarian. The agitator, divorced from the workers en masse, does not count. Unfortunately and stupidly, the workers see their champion as something great in himself and so elect him to offices in which he must serve capitalism.

In 1894, Burns defended himself against the attacks of the Labour movement, for refusing to censure and denounce Asquith, then Home Secretary, for the Featherstone shootings, after the latter had accepted full responsibility. Burns argued that "the local authorities and the magistrates were really to blame" and declared "that if men riot they must take the consequences, and not expect the amenities of law plus the benefits of revolutionary action."

Philip Snowden, subsequently Chancellor of the Exchequer, and therefore second minister, in the first Labour Government, justified Burns's attitude in 1907, as being the only one consistent with Parliamentarism. Writing in the *Sheffield Guardian* he insisted on the responsibility of the local authorities and magistrates but defended calling out the

military to quell strike-rioting. He added:

"We are hearing from some quarters the usual violent denunciation of the Government and the capitalists as murderers. Mr. Birrell is being put into the same chamber of horrors as Mr. Asquith, who happened to be Home Secretary at the time of the Featherstone riots. The Labour and Socialist movement has got beyond such wild, irresponsible, and unfounded talk as this. It might have been well to indulge in such extravagances when the movement had to fight to command a public hearing. But now the party is becoming recognised as worthy to be entrusted with the responsibility of administration, and it must show some sense of the fitness of things and some regard to fact and truth."

Which means that the Labour Parliamentary denunciation of John Burns was bluff and clamour!

During 1905 and 1906, I quoted repeatedly Karl Marx's declaration that the struggle is between the Commune and the Empire, that parliamentarism leads to Empire, but that the workers' interest is in a social republic, something quite distinct from and opposed to the parliamentary joint stock republic. Philip Snowden's defence of Birrell, like John Burns's defence of Asquith, sacrificed the workers' struggle to the interests of Empire.

Parliament has no place for the man with the Red Flag because the Red Flag is the banner of Anti-Parliamentarism.

10. JOHN BURNS: ANECDOTAGE

I would rather hear him in Hyde Park.
—A. G. GARDINER

I have explained the tremendous place occupied by John Burns in the London movement at the time that I joined the S.D.F. He typified the future development, and the place in class society, of the very organisation that called him renegade. At that time, to my mind, he merited that epithet. *"Judas Iscariot, John Burns' Verdict on Himself"* is a well-styled pamphlet consisting of unanswerable quotations from his speeches. What the compilers did not understand was that it explained them even better than it explained Burns. When it comes to the Great War period, and the attitude adopted by Burns during that war, it will be discovered that John Burns possessed an instinctive love of Socialism and an understanding not possessed by any of the later parliamentarians. Even when he became a Cabinet Minister he loved to go to Henderson's Book Shop in Charing Cross Road and ponder over the radical and libertarian papers. Despite the slanders of H. M. Hyndman and Joseph Burgess, John Burns was a keen student of Socialism. He had a mind for it. He also lacked the patience to toil for it. He wanted his place under capitalism. He craved recognition. He rejoiced in crowds, in tumult, and excitement. To him, this was life. When at last a conflict arose between his understanding of principle and his appetite for glory, understanding won. I know not with what struggle or secret reluctance, but apparently, so far as the world could see, without one moment's hesitation, John Burns decided that a man, styling himself a Socialist, could not support war. How different from the Morrisons and the Montagues who were so busy boosting the pamphlet, *Judas Iscariot*. When war came, they could not be quick enough to find a place for themselves in the ranks of the militarists. In due course, they got their reward. They found themselves in the peerage. John Burns, until he died, wandered round London buying and reading Socialist literature.

I saw John Burns very often in Henderson's book-shop, exchanging Socialist repartee with "old man Henderson", as the Socialists would say, or else with one of his two sons.

Osbert Sitwell, in his *Laughter in the Next Room*, depicts Henderson's shrewdness, clothed in an appearance of propaganda zeal.

Henderson published, in a sixpenny booklet, Sitwell's three satires, entitled *The Wintonbury Line* "devoted to an active and a great historic personage".

Sitwell adds:

"This pamphlet was published by the late Mr. Henderson, of "The Book Shop", in the Charing Cross Road, an elderly Scottish Socialist in a brown tweed suit, with a flaming red tie, spectacles, and a Trotskyite beard. He was very kind and genial in spite of a certain cynicism of appearance, as well as enterprising, and under his auspices the volume sold at Albert Hall 'Hands Off Russia' meetings and elsewhere in such great numbers—though without profit to myself, for I had neglected to ask for a contract—that for many years it remained my best-known work."

In 1905-6, the workers of London, like the workers elsewhere, and like children of all times, preferred anecdotage to thought. John Burns gave them plenty of anecdotage. The stories about him obscured his merits even from himself, and made his stature paltry. He clowned when he was born to defy and to recreate. He got some leisure and a measure of security but he sacrificed his manhood and wasted his oratory. He refound himself with sadness, I am sure. This was the penalty: to be sad and silent when he should have rejoiced and have been bold with speech. Silence had to be the magic of his utterance.

I did not know John Burns intimately. I knew him as a speaker, in Clerkenwell, and not in his own haunt, Battersea. I knew him in Charing Cross Road, as a pamphlet searcher and lover of Socialist papers. I heard the anecdotage retailed by his audience while he spoke. I heard it spoken as a kind of scandal behind his back when he was roaming along the booksellers' row or questing in the Book Shop. I found it good. Once, strolling along the Embankment, he met A. G. Gardiner, and said to him what he had said before: "When Ibsen said, 'the strongest man is he who stands alone', he had John Burns in his eye." Gardiner repeated the story—as he was intended to do. The story is a little cheap, unless the mixed joke and assertion was said in a certain way. Those who knew Burns, as I did, would know that Burns would say it in just the right way.

In London, his oratory made him famous. At one meeting, it was sometime during 1905, a speaker was preceding him on the platform. He said: *"A man's a man for a' that, as Burns says."* The audience rose with cheers for *"good old John"*.

Attacking his Tory opponents, Burns said of two somewhat young ones, not long down from Oxford but intent on their place in politics and society, yet determined to keep their class pose: *"The only difference between them is that one is strawberry and the other vanilla—they're both ices."*

Of a somewhat acrid person who was reported to be suffering from stomach trouble, Burns said: *"What can you expect of a man who has drunk nothing but vinegar for forty years?"*

On one occasion he rendered aid to a member of the Royal Artillery who had been injured and asked if the man was hurt. Burns admired his reply and told it to a meeting: *"The men of the Royal Artillery are sometimes killed, but never hurt."*

When Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman offered him the Cabinet seat, John Burns replied: *"Well, Sir Henry, this is the most popular thing you have done."*

I don't think that his reply to an S.D.F. challenge at a meeting was quite so good. Of course, I heard the story within a few minutes of Burns being questioned and making his reply. His opponents were fuming with rage. The answer did not make me fume. My anger turned to ice. It seemed mean as though the author's oratory had turned sour. The questioner had recalled the meeting at which John Burns had said that no man was worth more than £500 a year. Without a moment's hesitation, Burns replied:

"Sir, I am a Trade Unionist. The trade union wage for Cabinet Minister is £2,000 a year. Would you have me a blackleg?"

A great deal of comment could be made on this speech. One could use it to analyse Trade Unionism and to denounce professional agitation. I will not go into that here. as it is no part of biography. All that could be said and done I said to myself at the time. I did not like the humour. I did not forgive Burns for indulging in it until he had the courage to walk out of the Cabinet. That is another course that I will recall later. It belongs to my period of strong war resistance. My admiration for John Burns was reborn and my contempt for Social Democracy was complete. I then joined with Burns against war but I went far beyond Burns in speech and action.

The intervening period found me studying the history and principles of the Social

Democratic Federation and enquiring into the careers of its leaders who were also my colleagues—up to a point. Actually, my admiration did not last long for any of them. As Socialists, they were all very poor fish. I slowly came to recognise that the worth of Socialism was not in its past but in its future. Its beginnings, especially of the parliamentary Socialism that had sprung into existence since the Paris Commune and the First International, were not worth consideration. In principle and in personality the Socialist movement was as worthless as the Christian Church I had left in 1902. Today, as I write these lines, the conclusions of my youth are seen to be correct. There can be no dispute as to the accuracy of my vision. My imagination served me well and gave me clear understanding. Experience merely filled in the details.

11. BELFORT BAX

I have witnessed the birth and growth among the various nations of the tender plant of Internationalism.

—BELFORT BAX

One of the persons in the S.D.F. with whom I came into close written contact, not personal physical contact, was E. Belfort Bax. Much of his writings make him the thinker and historian of the movement, even its philosopher. Despite some promise he was most unsatisfactory. In the end, he proved, like the organisation to which he belonged, an utter failure. In crisis, he proved a broken reed. Yet he was probably the best the S.D.F. could produce.

To understand Bax, and even to understand the S.D.F., it is necessary to consider his career and mental evolution a little. This starts long before my birth and then goes on past the period at which I joined the S.D.F. and later resigned from it.

Belfort Bax was born at Leamington on July 23, 1854. He was reared at Brighton and looked back to a period that seems totally unreal to me today. Yet it must have existed and have been real enough. Bax often recalled how, as a child, he saw superannuated old gentlemen—sunning themselves on the seafront, and especially in the King's Road. on an afternoon. He remembered hearing of the American Civil War and the cotton famine in Lancashire. The unimaginative outlook of his parents on the subject of early to bed, sheer stupidity of the adult mind at a moment of historic importance, prevented him from seeing Enckes comet in 1861, which occurred in the middle of summer. The following year he was taken to the International Exhibition. This was a treat and so important. The portent of the comet meant nothing. What wisdom comes with maturity and age! At that time, yellow carriages were to be seen still, rolling up and down the King's Road, followed by mottled black and white dogs. The universal pot-hat, however, was replacing the old beaver, which was seen only occasionally, worn by old gentlemen. Then there was the broadcloth frock-coat.

Women wore enormous crinolines. The younger ones had their hair done up in nets. The older ones sported curls.

What a strange world it seems to me to have been! I remember some very small hang-overs from it. Belfort Bax's memories plunged me right into this forgotten time and supplied a living connection. I knew Bax through his writings and the gossip of the movement. I knew of his association with William Morris. Everyone regarded him as a great Socialist student, thinker and historian. It is true that his memoir of Jean Paul Marat was an invaluable volume. His research into the Anabaptists was a great work also. Yet there was a deadness about Bax. He could not speak. He read his lectures, when he delivered one, and he lacked fire, the essential element in a rebel's character. He turned from opportunism to theory and back to opportunism. His theory had no power of action and his opportunism lacked all suggestion of revolution. His Atheism was a quaint watering down of Agnosticism in reality although he attacked the Agnostics. One learned of his experiences in life from his close comrades who gossipped about him, and, of course, from odds and ends in

his essays. Finally he wrote a book of reminiscences, which did make some small contribution to the knowledge of the movement, largely Social Democratic, and slightly Anarchistic. I do not know if he was a frustrated man but he wrote like one. Clearly, at every vital point, his Socialism failed. Yet he was the best and the soundest of the English Social Democrats. He was the best of a poor bunch.

When war came, he went pro-war, terribly anti-German. And he had lived and worked in Berlin in his early years. Apart from knowing Social Democrats in Berlin he must have had German friends. He knew, not from theory merely, but from experience, that Germans were human just like British folk. His economics must have taught him that war was wrong. Yet he became the patriotic swashbuckler. And he defended strongly that poor and miserable figure of an alleged Socialist, H. M. Hyndman, warmonger with interests in guns. In 1906, he defended me against Quelch over the religious issue, as the reader will see. Six years later, with the Blatchford crew of militarists, he found it impossible to forgive me for exposing Hyndman's Gunshare Socialism. It has been always a rule with me never to care whom I offended, when principle was at stake. At the same time, I would never wound from spite or from any personal motive. I could state my principles in simple language and even mildly, but the statement had to be firm.

War is the armament maker's and investor's paradise, whether his private views are Socialist or not, and whether he be Atheist or Theist. As the rhyme has it:

He's full of cheer, the profiteer,
When things don't look so well;
Should foe meet foe, he scoops the dough,
"For war," says he, "is £."

Bax was a strong anti-feminist, which no Socialist should be.

Although Charles Voysey linked me with a much earlier period than Bax, I never thought of Voysey in the setting of his time. Yet he lived in a very different world from that in which I was born. My concern with Voysey was his vision and his philosophy. Bax seemed to offer me no wisdom of his own, although his researches influenced my ideas and political stand. He certainly gave me a factual understanding of the social struggle. It requires several folk to make a world and quite a few to supply soil and development. Bax gave me a world background and left me with a past so real and so adequately realised, that I could go farther back in time with understanding and assurance. Thus he was an important schoolmaster also.

When Belfort Bax was a child, yellow candles were seen hanging up outside oil shops. There were bedroom candlesticks with their necessary snuffers. Gas had been introduced but was looked at askance by some as a dangerous innovation. It was a new milestone and not one that had been passed. The time of electricity was to come. The tea-urn was in its afternoon glory. The famous Daguerreotype photograph was being superseded by more modern photography. Smoking, just think, was not common among the middle classes. Where practised it was in the form of a cigar. Cigarettes were unknown to the general public. The clay-pipe was universal among the working class. This survived into my own boyhood. I remember associates of my grandfather carrying their clay-pipes with them.



BELFORT BAX

The great literary lights of the period of Bax's childhood and youth must have influenced his style. Some of them were outstanding in my own youth. There was Thackeray, who died in 1863. Dickens, with whom my grandfather insisted on making me familiar, not by coercion, but by constant quoting and adoring references. And then there were Wilkie Collins, Bulwer Lytton, Anthony Trollope, Whyte Melville, Mrs. Henry Wood, and Miss Braddon. Bax remembered these works being sold in red and yellow covers on railway bookstalls. More intellectual folk read the Brontës, George Eliot, and Charles Kingsley. Poetry was represented by Longfellow and Tennyson. Serious reading found its expression in Hallam, Macaulay, and Carlyle. Darwin had shocked the theological world with his *Origin of Species*.

Bax grew up in this restricted age of stunted culture. The atmosphere was stifled with dogmatic theology. Bax's thoughts and writing reflected its influence, even when he protested.

His relations and friends were intellectually profitless. His paternal grandfather was born in 1777 and died in 1868. He remembered the French Revolution. Once he told Bax of the horrible massacres in Paris, which must have been the September massacres of 1792. But his mind wandered and he muddled his story with the events of 1848.

This grandfather remembered hearing John Brahams and some of the other great singers of the early nineteenth century. Here also the memory wandered and proved fruitless.

At fifteen, Bax studied music.

In 1864, the Bax family went from Brighton to Hampstead. Seven years later, it went to Streatham, then somewhat more rural than it is today. In 1871, came the Paris Commune and Bax began to think.

Here he found two streams of Freethought. The Positivists, with Harrison, Beasly, Dr. Bridges, etc., for the Communards. Bradlaugh and the Secularists against the Communards.

In 1882, Bax joined the Democratic Federation and so became a friend of Hyndman, Burns, Morris and others. Through Herman Jung, the watchmaker, who was a splendid type as man and Socialist, he became acquainted with the activity of John Most and Peter Kropotkin. Thus Bax was responsible for some of my interest in Anarchism.

As I have pointed out in another chapter, my Clerkenwell meetings brought me into contact with Malatesta and so I got to know about Anarchism through personal association. I also made more intimate contact with Malatesta through Silvio Corio with whom I became associated through my general platform activity in North and East End London.

From others, as well as from Belfort Bax, I learned how Edward Carpenter had given £300 towards the starting of *Justice* in June 1884. Its first editor was a man named Fitzgerald, who retired from the editorship, and later totally disappeared in Greece. Its second editor was H. M. Hyndman, who was succeeded by Harry Quelch, as a paid editor, in 1892. Quelch remained editor until his death in 1915.

The Democratic Federation became the Social Democratic Party and then the Social Democratic Federation.

Early in 1885, the great split occurred and the Socialist League was formed. The split actually occurred at an executive meeting in 1884. Lady Burne-Jones (then Mrs. Burne-Jones) has told the story of it as related to her by William Morris. It was really a vote of censure on Hyndman. Hyndman voted for himself. Against him were Morris, Robert Banner, Scheu, Arching, Eleanor Marx, Belfort Bax, etc. It was 10 to 8 voting.

Belfort Bax left the League in 1888 and returned to the S.D.F. William Morris returned two years later. The complaint against the Socialist League was that it had become Anarchist. With the withdrawal of Morris, the Socialist League collapsed.

Bax died on November 26, 1926. One June day, two years before his death he looked back forty years and recalled the S.D.F. days. The Socialist League was forgotten completely. His retrospect was quite false. He recalled *"that January day in 1884 when 'Justice' first saw the light"*.

He spoke of "the enthusiasm, the belief that 'things were getting hot', as Hyndman was fond of saying; the conviction of the nearness of 'the revolution'; the feud between believers in political action *and those who were convinced that all political action. and indeed anything beyond propaganda tempered by occasional 'direct action' in the shape of riots, was of the—well, of the bourgeois!"*

He mentioned, by name, some of those who had *"become the victims of the 'man with the scythe'. Hyndman, Morris, Jones, Quelch,*

Williams, strong and active in the cause, each in his own way. . . ."

Of the persons whose names Bax recalled, probably only one merits remembering—Joynes. Yet his personality has left no impression. Morris lives—but does he, after all, merit remembering? The rest were definitely humbugs and charlatans. Occasionally each uttered an amiable platitude that menaced nothing.

12. GENERAL ELECTION, 1906

Though Liberalism is not Socialism, yet I defy anyone to draw the distinct dividing line always between Liberalism and Socialism.
—J. M. ROBERTSON, M.P.

The next great trouble in the S.D.F. occurred near the time that I joined the S.D.F. Towards the end of 1903, a break occurred among militant members in Scotland and they had formed a section of the Socialist Labour Party, on the basis of the theory of the S.L.P. of U.S.A., and the principles outlined by its founder, Daniel De Leon. In London, on June 12, 1904, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, labelled by Harry Quelch, "the Socialist Impossibilists", was organised.

This organisation was the culmination of discussion within the ranks of the S.D.F. The malcontents claimed to be true "Marxists" which is doubtful. Superficially, however, they seemed to uphold the working-class struggle because they objected to the statement made by Hyndman, in *Justice,* on August 17, 1901, that the workers must be aided *and guided* towards emancipation *"by men from the class above"*.

The same year, in withdrawing from the Executive Council of the S.D.F., Hyndman stated that the minority of the S.D.F. were wholly destitute of political aptitude and that *"very much was to be desired in respect of their understanding of the basic principles of Socialism"*.

When I withdrew from the organisation in 1906, I felt that Hyndman was in the very category of the persons he decried and despised. The truth was that, during my membership, I had no time for Hyndman. During the ensuing few years I developed a strong political antagonism to him.

Mouthing the phrase of the class struggle, the S.D.Fers would speak of voting Liberal to smash the Tories at one time: and then again, they would speak of voting Tory to smash the Liberals. They viewed the struggle for Socialism as a parliamentary and not as a revolutionary struggle, and they liked to regard themselves as the balance of power party.

I did not know anything about them at this time but when I joined them I often got into discussions with their expelled or resigned members over the 19th and 20th Party Conferences. The first was in 1899, and the second in 1900. Here they decided to support John Burns, then Liberal candidate for Battersea, despite the fact that they resented his break with the party, and Henry Labouchere, then Liberal candidate for Northampton, who later, when supporting Bradlaugh, referred to himself as "Christian Member for Northampton". This with a twinkle at the expense of the over-pious. The S.D.F. supported Burns and Labouchere and also Philip Stanhope, Liberal candidate for Burnley, because these men were opposed to the Boer War.

I upheld this policy. I still hold that it was a sound policy; if ballot-box activity is ever sound. To protest against war is right always.

The same observation does not apply to the support by Harry Quelch of the five Liberal-Labour candidates for the L.C.C.: Ben Cooper, G. Dew. H. Gosling, J. Gregory, and W. Steadman. These men were nominated at a meeting of the London Trades Council of which Harry Quelch afterwards became chairman. This was in 1904, the year when I associated with the S.D.F., prior to joining it.

The Balfour Government resigned on December 4, 1905 and the King sent for



SIR ROBERT DONALD

Campbell-Bannerman to form a ministry. Parliament dissolved on January 3, 1906 and the General Election followed on January 13. This was foreseen towards the end of 1905 and the various political groupings made their plans accordingly.

In December 1905, Percy Alden, then Liberal candidate for Tottenham in spite of the opposition of the local S.D.F., published a letter from Harry Quelch supporting him for parliament. He also supported the candidature of J. J. Jerrett, a thrice-expelled member of the S.D.F., at North West Ham. Quelch likewise supported the candidature of W. C. Steadman, as Liberal candidate for Central Finsbury, although we of the Clerkenwell Branch of the S.D.F. were opposed to Steadman, and told the electors not to vote.

William Thorne, himself a Liberal and Social Democratic candidate in one, supported Percy Alden for Tottenham, although he stood as a Liberal, and was met with the determined opposition of the local branch of the S.D.F. Thorne also supported Will Crooks, the Liberal candidate for Woolwich. Mr. D. Naoroji, whom my grandfather had supported in Central Finsbury, comes into the picture. He stood as Liberal candidate for North Lambeth and was supported by J. F. Green, the Treasurer of the S.D.F. In view of Naoroji being an Indian and representing the struggle of India, I daresay his candidature ought not to be viewed as an ordinary Liberal candidature. It was something like the struggle of Bradlaugh at Northampton, which was certainly not an ordinary Liberal candidature. J. Hunter Watts, of the S.D.F. executive, supported Masterman, the Liberal candidate for Dulwich. This was certainly a damnable campaign because, even as a Liberal, Masterman was an undesirable candidate and certainly an anti-Socialist.

I understood, although Scotland at that time meant nothing to me either politically or geographically, that in Govan, the S.D.F. supported Mr. J. Hill, the Liberal-Labour candidate.

Very important, from my point of view, was the activity of William Thorne. The Liberals supported him and he supported them. The *Daily Chronicle*, led by Robert Donald, organised a victory fleet of cars to support him and to support Liberal and Liberal-Labour candidates in London and the Home Counties. They even wanted me to go farther afield. Harry Quelch sent a letter to Donald saying that I was a member of the S.D.F., a good speaker, and would play my part in this campaign. I was not consulted at all. Donald informed me and, of course, offered what was bribery, although it did not rank as bribery. I refused to have anything to do with this campaign, for the simple reason that I did not regard it as Socialist activity and I had no intention of being a Liberal political hack. Also, I liked being consulted about my activity. In the end this led to me losing my job after a fearful row in the *Chronicle* office.

Technically I was compelled to resign. Had I fallen in with this scheme my journalistic and political future under capitalism would have been assured. No imprisonments would have come my way. I would have been secured economically. My attitude in this matter, and a little later, my stand over the Deshawai outrage exiled me from Fleet Street and forced me to remain in poverty. I do not regret the fact. I record it.

13. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE PEERAGE

Revolution is not a gala promenade.

—LENIN

During 1905-1906, I agreed very heartily with the S.D.F. in its desire to destroy the House of Lords. I coupled the monarchy with it and, as I made both immediate items, this did not please too much H.M. Hyndman and Harry Quelch. Technically and theoretically, they agreed with me and of course both items were on the S.D.F. programme. The House of Lords idea appealed to them as being practical. They must have had some idea of forming a Labour Government this side of the Social Revolution, for they grew more hesitant about the monarchy.

Here also I was up against the recently organised S.P.G.B. Impossiblists. They wanted to capture political power and then, apparently, depose the monarchy. My attiture was more militant. I was aware of the fact that one could have a Capitalist republic. I knew also that one could not have a Socialist monarchy. And I began to think that all parliamentarians lacked the one essential to social change, *the will to revolution*. I felt that complete opposition to monarchy and peerage was a way of expressing the will to revolution. I have no time for patient cowardice and hesitation of utterance, whether those who made it were avowed opportunists or the academic revolutionists of the chair, so well read, so intellectually perfect, and so damnably fearful concerning action. Such folk were not the pioneers of change.

In Britain I realised that parliamentarism meant monarchy. And I saw that its team work inevitably led to a Labour Peerage. Montague, who had a clear head, must have known this, and when, after the period to which I am referring, during the years of the First World War, Amwell became a great patriot and militarist, and I consistent with my Socialism became an active war-resister, he may have scented a peerage.

The story of how he became a peer he told in the *Sunday Dispatch*. This was reproduced in the *World Digest* for April-May 1956.

Montague explained why he became a peer. What an apology!

He wrote:

. . . I, a one-time newspaper seller, schooled briefly in a Battersea basement kitchen, am now a baron. It is an interesting, sometimes costly, often hard-working existence.

"Would you like to go 'upstairs'?" said the Prime Minister (then Mr. Attlee) chattily to me one day in 1947 in the House of Commons. That is generally the way the question is put to members.

I went home to ask my wife. and she was dubious. . . .

I wanted to make way for a younger man in my Islington constituency, and a peerage wouold enable me to keep on with a political career that had already lasted some 50 years.



HARRY QUELCH

So I said "Yes." I think that sort of consideration is what has led many Labour M.P.s to go to the "Lords".

I was born just off Amwell Street in the old eccelsiastical parish of Amwell at the head of the New River, just behind Sadler's Wells Theatre in Clerkenwell. The New River runs from the Hertfordshire village of Amwell right through Islington, and the name is a corruption of "St Anne's Well". That seemed a close enough association, so I chose "Lord Amwell of Islington" for my title.

Up to then I hadn't been able to tell anyone except my wife, for these things are supposed to be kept very secret. . . .

Another person that I knew well in the 1905-6 days, and with whom my association continued for some time because of his Freethought views, was Harry Snell. He had worked in a public house as barman and I think he had occasionally been "chucker-out".

Once Harry Snell took the chair for me at a meeting of the Camberwell Ethical Society. It was a most respectable gathering and exuded an atmosphere utterly foreign to my thought and style. I have never liked Ethical Society meetings. It was a few years after this meeting that he became a peer.

Some correspondence passed between us after Snell took his seat in the House of Lords. Snell expressed more friendliness towards me than I did towards him. I disliked him taking a peerage.

It seemed that an explanation he once made to me, like the explanation of Montague, implied the continuation of politics and the capitalist system. It meant that Labour Parliamentarism has no hope for the workers because it makes for perpetual careerism.

14. WHY ATTACK RELIGION?

It is our duty as Socialists to root out the faith of God with all our zeal, nor is one worthy of the name who does not consecrate himself to the spread of Atheism.

—WILLIAM LIEBKNECHT

In a previous chapter I have referred to the dispute that arose between *Justice*, officially edited by Harry Quelch, and myself on the subject of religion. Although Quelch accused me of Atheism the dispute arose out of a plea on my part not to distress the child's mind with speculative dogma before it was able to think for itself. Only in the discussion was my Atheism asserted. Notwithstanding my belief in the historicity of Jesus, as man and an agitator, a belief which research will show one day to be correct, I am a convinced Atheist. I believed in 1906, as I believe today, that the true Christian must be an Atheist. Men turned to Jesus because the Emperor had fashioned God in the image of his militarism and made heaven into an armed camp. Jesus personified rags thinking in opposition to established culture and towering in his vision above the world of mockery and imposture that the working class were to assault and to destroy. Jesus stands out in history as the figure of Atheism intensified. Heaven has to fall that earth might inherit its own.

I do not know the exact date of the *Justice* in which the following abridged letter appeared. *Justice* must have published it sometime in June or July 1906. This proves that the Quelch attack on me for bigotry was undeserved.

The letter, as abridged by Harry Quelch himself, read:

SOCIALIST SUNDAY SCHOOLS

"Guy A. Aldred writes: 'Comrade Russell does not think children are capable of judging for themselves, and he pleads, therefore, for gentle parental persuasion. This is a very nice way of putting it, but in plain, blunt language it amounts to unduly prejudicing the child's mind. If children are not able to judge for themselves I submit that the parents have no right to judge for them. Comrade Russell asks why, if Socialist teaching be for the future wellbeing of the children, should they be denied the benefit of such teaching, wisely and suggestively imparted? Why, indeed? Substitute 'Bible teaching' for 'Socialist teaching', and you have the case for 'religious' teaching in the public schools stated in a nutshtll. Our comrade further submits that the vital elements of Socialism are practical and not speculative. If they were accepted, the principles upon which they are based recognised, I heartily concur. But until they are recognised, however scientific they belong to the realm of theory. I believe in helping Socialist Sunday schools, but it is because of this and my respect for the infantile imagination that I am opposed to the bigoted spirit which some of my comrades would institute therein. In conclusion, I will only add that to admit the right of Socialists to prejudice the child's mind at its most im-

pressionable period is to admit the right of every believer in this or that pious superstition to prejudice their children's minds. And I deny the right of the parent to do so.'"

Quelch charged me with bigotry after publishing this letter. The following correspondence ensued:

As I have said, in this discussion, Belfort Bax defended me. He was deemed the scholar of the Socialist movement and his support was regarded as a wonderful thing. Belfort Bax had knowledge and was some kind of philosopher and in many ways a working-class historian. His outlook was that of the middle class and his vision could not bear too much strain. The study, therefore, of Bax, Quelch, and myself in relation to the religious issue is a most interesting one.

For the sake of easy understanding, I refer to my own letters in the following correspondence in the third person.

Guy Aldred, August 1906, in a letter to Harry Quelch, then editor of *Justice*. This letter was summarised in the Social Democratic organ for August 11 of that year:

"No man is entitled to be styled a Socialist, who does not understand the logic of Socialism: and the logic of Socialism is to be found in a philosophic and evolutionary conception of society and natural and physical development along the well-ascertained lines of law and order that involve an entire negation of all belief in the efficacy of prayer and the capricious interference of any deity . . . Certainly, the Socialist may never attack Christianity except in so far as such an attack is relevant to a defence and elucidation of the tenets of Socialism. This reservation only means that there are angles from which Christian doctrines may be attacked, that have no immediate bearing on the economic struggle. It does not mean that belief in those doctrines is compatible with a belief in Socialism. There is a realm of private enquiry, of private subsidiary religious opinion and reflection, of active speculation, peculiar to the individual and not common to the cause. Opinions falling within this category should not be urged from the Socialist platform as part and parcel of the Socialist philosophy. No sane propagandist proposes to do this. But we do ridicule the idea that a man can be a Socialist and entertain a private religious opinion, the main principle of which is contrary to the main teaching of Socialism. We do insist that Socialism implies Atheism."

E. Belfort Bax in *Justice*, August 25, 1906

"Comrade Aldred's reply to the somewhat stale exhortation conveyed under the above query ['Why attack Religion?'] leaves little to be desired. . . . There seems to be a growing sentiment in the Germany Party that the favourite 'tag' that 'religion is a private matter', will have henceforward to be taken with a very considerable grain of salt. The phrase undoubtedly often covers an unworthy and somewhat hypocritical shirking of a necessary question—and, moreover, for the most part a perfectly useless one. In spite of the attempts sometimes made, no one is really deceived into thinking that Socialism is compatible with any of the traditional systems of dogma termed religions. Thus, the old 'tag' is in short a conventional lie, and surely the less of these conventional lies we can do with the better. When we find persons calling themselves Socialists like Mr. Ramsay MacDonald trying to make themselves 'practical', with Nonconformist voters and the like, by protesting their zeal for the 'religious' indoctrination of children as an apology for their advocacy of secular education, I think it is about time for the thorough-going Socialist or Social Democrat of the S.D.F. to think twice before entrenching himself behind the 'Why attack Religion?' attitude. Modern religion, like modern politics, is a part of the modern capitalist system—one of the wings of the vampire (c.f. Walter Crane's well-known cartoon)."

E. Belfort Bax in *Justice*, September 22, 1906

"Accusations of intolerance are often brought against the S.D.F. The fact is, every man or organisation prepared to stick to principles risks the accusation of intolerance and bigotry, just as every man who is brave of rashness. We, of the S.D.F., did not appreciate it when certain persons some time ago accused us of intolerance and bigotry for holding to the principle of the class war. And this is a precisely parallel case. Comrade Aldred presumably holds that Socialism as a conception of life (as distinguished from Socialistic legislation) is incompatible with Christianity. Large numbers, probably the majority of Socialists, hold the same view. Those who think thus can hardly agree that attacks on Christianity 'form no part' (i.e.

never form a part) of 'Socialist propaganda', or that such attacks 'should be exercised elsewhere than on a Socialist platform.' "

Belfort Bax certainly wrote well in my defence. What he says could not be improved upon. His actual view, however, was somewhat different from mine. At this time, whilst associating with Secularists and Social Democrats, I approved of none of their views. G. W. Foote, following in Bradlaugh's footsteps, defined Atheism in a feeble way *and refused to say that God did not exist*. Chapman Cohen followed Foote and adopted the same line. In his *Justice* correspondence, Belfort Bax stopped himself in time; for, in his fuller essays, he declared that the Atheist who said that there was *no God*, did not exist: and J. M. Wheeler, writing as a Freethought biographical authority, dismissed Bakunin with contempt for being a Netheist and *not* an Atheist. As though a Netheist was *not* an Atheist.

My attitude was completely proletarian. My stand was not original. Richard Carlile had defined it for me long before. I revered his definition as Labour's Atheism of revolt and endorsed it completely.

Richard Carlile wrote in his bold, uncompromising clarity of language:

"I confess that mine is a daring, and an unblushing atheism. I feel that I have nothing to fear with it; but from these worse than brutes called christians: and rather than fear them, I will court premature extinction. I ask you seriously, on which side the malignant frenzy lies. Who are they who turn the world upside down—the christians who distort every natural view of things to support their theory of spiritualism, or the materialists, who rest upon none but natural views, who receive their knowledge of things in the same simple manner in which those things present themselves to their observation? Yes, daring and unblushing atheism is creeping abroad and saturating the working population, which are the proper persons to be saturated with it. I look at no others. It has been said to me by more than one person: 'Let us write in the style of Hume and Gibbon, and seek readers among the higher classes.' I answer, NO, I know nothing of the so-called higher classes, but that they are robbers; I will work towards the raising of the working population above them. And this is now in admirable progress. The Mechanics' Institutes will finally settle the question, as to which shall be the higher class. I, as a mechanic, will allow no class to be higher than myself."

That defined my position in 1906. It defines my position today. It has defined my position during the intervening years. It is the philosophic challenge of the hovels to the mansions. It is the defiant cultural challenge of the class conscious gutter. It is the unconquerable majesty of the people rising above the mock palaces of a false heaven and crumbling them into the annihilation of history. It is the workers taking possession of that which their labour has created. It is the materialisation of social justice.

15. MUCH EXAGGERATED

The report was greatly exaggerated.

—MARK TWAIN

This is a very minor incident of my Social Democratic activity. It could as easily be omitted as recorded. It is an event in my life but it has no bearing on my evolution or place in society. I record it in a spirit of mischief.

It was my custom from 1906-1909—and I resumed it following my release from prison for alleged Indian Sedition—to address not less than three, and sometimes five meetings on Sunday. The year 1906 was a most strenuous one and usually I skipped my dinner. I would find myself somewhere near Camberwell at about 2 p.m., after having spoken either on Clerkenwell Green or else at Highbury Corner or possibly at Stanmore Road in the morning. Then I would buy six bananas for dinner and proceed to Brixton or Brockwell Park. This strenuouos activity took a lot out of me. At that time one could buy six bananas for threepence or, at the outside price, for fourpence-halfpenny.

On other Sundays, I would speak at Regents

Park in the morning and proceed direct to some South Side spot in the afternoon. In this case also, bananas would be my mid-day fare.

It was also a fact that I have never been able to stand the heat as well as I could the cold. If I recall rightly some of the June days were very hot.

At that time, *Reynolds Newspaper* was very friendly to me and followed my activity a lot. I don't know how it happened but on the first Sunday in June 1906, I was speaking in Regents Park, and speaking strongly. I must have been overcome by the heat. All I remember is speaking, then not speaking. Next I was conscious of someone trying to give me some brandy and refusing to take same, and so recovering without the aid of alcohol. Next Sunday, June 10, 1906, a small paragraph appeared in *Reynolds Newspaper*. This cutting must have got lost.

The following Sunday, June 17, *Reynolds* published the following item:

A very dull-witted person wrote a "biography" of Mr. Guy A. Aldred, 133 Goswell Road, E.C., and announced his death. We are glad to say there is no truth in the statement. Mr. Aldred is very much alive. and as active as ever, in his bright way, working for the cause of progress.

The *Islington Gazette,* for June 13, had commented on the *Reynolds'* somewhat premature announcement as follows:

"GREATLY EXAGGERATED"

Mr. Guy A. Aldred, the young Freethought and Socialist propagandist who has lately attracted considerable attention locally, is the last person privileged to read his obituary notice. In last Sunday's "Reynolds" there appeared a nine-line paragraph giving a circumstantial account of his sudden death, and on the following day wreaths began to arrive at his residence. Mr. Aldred is however very much alive, and hopes to live on to make converts to his gospel of Freethought and confound the perpetrators of this cruel and vulgar hoax.

In any case, I seemed to have survived very well. This announcement was made fifty years ago. I am carrying on the struggle still. I hope my vitality will not give out until some real social change has been effected.

CONTENTS

PART V. WITH THE PARLIAMENTARIANS —Continued

16. De Leon in Clerkenwell
page 145

17. DANIEL DE LEON
page 147

18. A VILLAGER'S VIEW
page 148

19. S.D.F. CALENDAR
page 150

20. S.P.G.B. FORMED
page 156

21. AN OPEN MIND
page 158

22. "LETTERS TO THE EDITOR"
page 160

PART VI. "ISLINGTON GAZETTE" ACTIVITY

1. FIRST CONTACT
page 164

2. HISTORY OF THE "GAZETTE"
page 165

ILLUSTRATIONS

Daniel De Leon
page 146

"Islington Gazette" Front Page
page 167

"The Commonweal" Front Page
page 168

PART V. WITH THE PARLIAMENTARIANS—*Contd.*

16. DE LEON IN CLERKENWELL

To Daniel De Leon belongs the discovery of the structure of Socialist society.

—S.L.P. CLAIM

I did not attach the least importance to it at the time but in 1904 I saw Daniel De Leon speaking on Clerkenwell Green. He was a very small, unimpressive man, with a beard, and he spoke from a very small platform to hardly any audience. To my mind, he was uttering a few Socialist platitudes. De Leon's picture, as published in the S.L.P. press of U.S.A., gives one the impression that he was a very big man. This head-and-shoulders portrait is quite misleading. I think if the portrait is looked at closely the first impression is seen to be false. I am speaking as one who saw him in the flesh and so this view may be an error.

Despite what the S.L.P. members said, De Leon was not a great speaker. His speeches were recitations. He was pompous, as small men can be. Each speech was intended to be a manifesto. Hence he lacked fire. The organisation he founded suffered from this defect also. It lacked fire and De Leon never got into trouble. He was a revolutionary of the chair. Nevertheless, he anticipated the Soviet form of organisation.

De Leon, strangely enough, really combined Socialist and Anarchist concepts and outlined the industrial constitution of the new or post-revolutionary society. Lenin completed his concept.

De Leon was a clear thinker in a narrow sphere of thought. Otherwise, he was a most orthodox little man with a Victorian mind or whatever may have been the American equivalent of that type of mind. In real things of life, a man without flair. Despite what his wife wrote about him, I doubt if he could be loveable.

He introduced me to a knowledge of the Socialist Labour Party and Industrial Unionism. I did not concern myself seriously with Industrial Unionism until a few years later.

De Leon considered his biography and the record of his political activity a chronology of American Marxism. Such was the man's egotism. His work has ended in organisational stalemate but he left an important concept behind him. He was never able to work the concept out in reality. The times were against him.

This was not the view of his first disciples, most of whom later paid little attention to his memory, and became just ordinary Labor fakers. They held that the birth of De Leon was a notable landmark in the history of the social struggle. I have heard them explain that De Leon was the first prophet of revolution who taught that the inspirational impulses of the social revolution must be drawn from the promise of the great future. Before him, even Marx and Engels, as well as the Utopian Socialists, had taught that the vitalising achievements of the future were foreshadowed in the struggle. Therefore De Leon was the first seer of the great future.

In my mind this estimate of the man is incorrect. De Leon drew his inspiration from current industrial conditions. He drew little on the past only because he was no real hero in the struggle. His revolutionary concept was dully prosaic. He was the parliamentarian who rounded off the parliamentary epoch of Socialism. He closed the period which began with the disastrous overthrow of the Paris Commune, the period during which all so-called Socialists looked to the institution of Socialism by the methods of passing laws through parliament. Careerists at heart, and with a desire to improve their status under capitalism, they developed the naive idea that the capitalist class would submit and then obey the mandates of legislatures.

The capitalist class is willing to go a long way in its professional obedience to acts of parliament so long as the institution of property is not destroyed. Monopoly capitalism may destroy personal private capitalism and enterprise, *en route* to State capitalism. But dividends and class distinction and ex-

ploitation must remain. Attack that and you face uncompromising resistance. De Leon sensed this truth in a dull, matter-of-fact way, and planned to combat such capitalist resistance. Hence his parliamentarism became negative action, the capture of state power to neutralise its operation, and positive industrial action, to give a constitution to the new proletarian order.

Despite what Marx said about violence being the midwife, he lacked the revolutionary flair of Bakunin and considered, as did Engels, that insurrection was an out-of-date playing at revolution. Marx and Engels really thought — and their disciples developed the theme to a much greater extent — that insurrection was obsolete. They forgot that Marx published his *Communist Manifesto,* organised or inspired the First International, and wrote his political pamphlets against the Social Democrats of his early years, precisely because they were parliamentarians. Parliamentary Socialism has meant always the negation of struggle and Socialism. It is simply careerist trickery, corruption, and log-rolling.

De Leon analysed and saw the danger of trade union fakerdom. He rightly saw it as a hideous parasitic excrescence of the struggle. In doing so, although the idea repelled him, he was uniting Socialism and Anarchism. He knew that this was the trend of his analysis. But he had a social democratic mind and hated Anarchism.

De Leon was on his way back from the Amsterdam International Socialist Congress when I saw him. Ernie Hunter met him at the station. Hunter's career as a Social Democrat, member of the Labour Party, paid but unimprisoned member of the Fellowship of Conscientious Objectors, and later paid staff writer on the *Daily Herald,* labelled the man a mean, soul-less creature. I debated with him at Walthamstow, when he had returned to the S.D.F. De Leon had led him back to the parliamentary fold and back to parliamentarism.

During my Clerkenwell Freethought and Socialist activity, Ernest Hunter took the platform against me on Wednesday, March 27, 1907. He demanded the platform in order to defend the parliamentary careerists. His challenge and opposition were reported in the *Islington Gazette* for April 2, 1907. Hunter was very angry when I recalled De Leon's visit to Clerkenwell.

At this time, Hunter was one of De Leon's chief English disciples. In Glasgow, Neil MacLean was another. He also became one of the worst fakers in the Scottish Labour movement.

The London branch of the S.L.P. met at the old Communist Club in Charlotte Street, Soho, known officially as Der Kommunistischen Arbeiter Bildungsverein. The walls of the dining room were hung with black and white pictures of Marx, Lassalle, Mazzini, Garibaldi, etc. Bakunin had often spoken there. I remember speaking there a few years after



DANIEL DE LEON

this time on the Chicago Martyrs with Guy Bowman, who, for a very short time, made quite a noise in the movement.

At this meeting of De Leon and his for-the-time disciples, Ernie Hunter spoke about a meal to De Leon. The latter had a reputation as a linguist but he could not follow Hunter's Bethnal Green accent. As an American, he spoke of his mail, a term not much used in Britain for letters or correspondence. Every time Hunter said "meal", De Leon thought he was speaking of "mail". But there was no mail forthcoming, and the misunderstanding created some confusion even about the meal.

De Leon stayed at the Manchester Hotel in Aldersgate. He went to see Karl Marx's grave in Highgate Cemetery. Why I cannot understand. Of what purpose is it to gaze at the grave of a dead man? He spoke at Holborn Hall and there met Jim Connell, author of *The Red Flag*.

At this time I knew nothing about Scotland, but De Leon travelled to Edinburgh and paid a visit to the Canongate to see the monument that indicated the burial place of Adam Smith. For one who did not believe in the past, De Leon troubled himself a lot about graves. My attitude is that of Richard Carlile towards the bones of Thomas Paine. I believe in the living writing not the dead bones of the pioneer of thought and freedom. This Mecca business is nonsense to my mind.

17. DANIEL DE LEON

His party became his egotism. He dwarfed his soul and he lived, a pedant without courage. His vision vanished.

—ANON.

Daniel De Leon was born on December 14, 1852, in Curacao, an island off the coast of Venezuela, and educated in Europe. He returned to America in 1872, and graduated from Columbia Law School in New York City in 1878. He held the position of lecturer in that college for six years. In 1886 he took an active part in the Henry George campaign, and severed, in consequence, his connection with the law school. Four years later he joined the Socialist Labour Party, and in 1892 became editor of its official organ, *The People,* and leading theorist in the Socialist movement of America. He held his editorial position until his death, on May 11, 1914.

De Leon was noted for his bitter and often outrageously unjust attacks on Anarchism. The lawyer in him degraded his Socialist pen. But the trend of his work was to reconcile Anarchism and Marxism. He was always paying tribute to Marx for the latter's analysis of capitalist production. But he supplemented Marx's work with an even more important contribution to the philosophy of the workers' struggle, a definite application of Socialist knowledge to the purpose of evolving the new social order. De Leon proclaimed that Socialism was incomplete unless it adopted a negative programme on the political field and a positive programme on the industrial. This was his conception of social revolution, of Marxism, Communism, or Socialism. And it is the true and only conception.

De Leon saw and taught that the system of government based on territorial lines has outlived its function: that economic development has reached a point where the Political State cannot even appear to serve the workers as an instrument of industrial emancipation. Accumulated wealth, concentrated in a few hands, controls all political government. No franchise permits the democracy to control accumulated wealth.

Once he had found his stride, De Leon devoted himself to this definition of Socialism as the Industrial Republic. I read all of his pamphlets. They centred around this one small thought but it was important.

De Leon's Marxist chronology was very simple.

1852: Daniel De Leon born, December 14.
1876: First step in the organisation of the Socialist Labor Party.
1889: S.L.P. took part in founding of Second International at Paris, France; participated in naming May Day an international workers' holiday.
1890: De Leon joined the S.L.P. The Party

announced that it was no longer "a party of propaganda". Shed its German garb. Became a full-fledged Marxian political party and addressed itself to American workers. Entered its own tickets in state elections including those in New York State, with merely poor propaganda result.

1891: De Leon toured U.S.A. He claimed that this activity cemented the Party into a homogeneous national organisation. Founding of the *People*, official Party organ. (De Leon elected editor in 1892.) S.L.P. attempts to introduce Socialist principles into trade unions.

1896: S.L.P. abandoned hope of winning over the unions; endorsed the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. De Leon delivered his address, "Reform or Revolution".

1898-99: S.T.L.A. struggle against A.F. of L. De Leon delivers and circulates his speech: *What Means This Strike?*

1900: The *People* becomes a daily. Great impetus would have been given to Socialist education but for De Leon's rigid sectarianism.

1904: Formulation of Socialist Industrial Union principles and epochal definition of Industrial Government as the administrative organ of Socialist society. Presented in De Leon's address on *Burning Question of Trades Unionism*. De Leon was delegate to the International Socialist Congress at Amsterdam.

1905: Founding of the original Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) on Socialist Industrial Union principles.

This is how far De Leon had got when I heard him speak. His reception must have been a great rebuff for his egotism.

Three years after De Leon's death, his wife wrote an account of his life as husband, father, friend and neighbour. She pictured De Leon's view of the man's place in the home as a benevolent autocrat. Although he maintained women's right of free and untrammelled divorce. his views are shown by her to have been Victorian Utopianism. He believed in the superiority of the male as head of the house, but it was to be expressed with great good nature. This is a kind of American cotton slave approach to life.

In another article she described her first meeting with De Leon. She was then Miss Bertha Canary and lived at Independence, Kansas. De Leon reached her house late on Thursday, April 23, 1891. She was in the garden and her young brother came out and cried: "Visitor to see you." She went in and saw De Leon. As their eyes met, each said within: *"I am yours and you are mine."* Self-introductions followed. Three days later De Leon returned to New York. A correspondence followed. On June 10, 1892, they were married at South Norwalk, Connecticut. The song of songs, said Mrs. De Leon, lasted until De Leon's death nearly twenty-two years later.

With the usual orthodoxy of Socialist revolutionists under capitalist society, Bertha Canary resorted to the common practice of styling herself Bertha Canary De Leon. The good comrades approved and considered that this expressed the Socialist principle of the equality of the sexes.

As I look back, one truth is established by De Leon's activity and the S.L.P. The same truth is expressed by the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The S.P.G.B. here, and the S.L.P. in U.S.A., speak of their fifty years existence. Actually, during that fifty years, each party has shed its converts galore, and therefore the portraiture of fifty years unceasing loyalty to an idea or ideal is false. The party is an anonymous entity. There was no party. There was simply De Leon and his contribution to the theory and literature of the movement. The ever-changing party was merely the shadow that his personality cast —nothing more. There was not and never has been a real political organisation. There was only a doctrine—De Leonism.

18. A VILLAGER'S VIEW

To be a world citizen one must be a good villager. The world is man's parish but the village is his household.

—ANON.

Daniel De Leon visited Clerkenwell, not London. This was my view of his visit. As regards propaganda activity and results, I do not know how far this view was correct

factually. It seems ridiculous to imagine this man coming all the way from New York, visiting a conference at Amsterdam, and then turning up in London merely to visit that small district known as Clerkenwell. It is like me journeying to New York merely to visit Brooklyn, Manhattan, or the Bronx. It was the outlook of the villager. I have explained and ridiculed this outlook in a previous chapter. I want now to draw attention to its sanity in some respects and to the truths it contains.

In the matter of political and social organisation much more centres about the village or the district than the great man of party organisation and imperial outlook would have us believe. The local or regional organisation of the community is the key to all social organisation. Administration may be world-wide but it must be also thoroughly and completely local. The world depends on the commune and the daily throbbing struggle of the individual worker in his work centre, and also in his living centre. Except that Anarchism seems to despise organisation in itself, which is an error, there is a fundamental vitality in its local concept that the big-party power complex of the Social Democrat ignores.

De Leon's somewhat tragically ignored meeting on Clerkenwell Green brought this truth home to me. It also made me reflect on a characteristic which has developed with the years. This peculiarity has cost me much patronage. It has made me many enemies. I would not say that it had cost me any friendships for the persons who became my enemies would never have been my friends; but they would have modified the expression of their ill-will.

De Leon was regarded as a great man. He considered himself such. His appearance on a small and unworthy platform, at a poorly advertised meeting on Clerkenwell Green, had no immediate effect on my activity. I was anxious to hear him because the United States itself attracts me. I like to hear American Socialist and Freethought speakers. I did then and I do now, if any still exist. I was interested in his message; and I was sorry that he did not have a larger meeting. That was his due.

I saw De Leon. I heard him. I had no personal curiosity concerning him. I had no wish to know him or even to meet him casually. I was prepared to read what he wrote. I determined to study his writings in an impartial way. Beyond this I had no interest in the man. He did not measure up to my type of hero. And a man or woman must have vitality of purpose, an uncompromising courage, before I desire to know him. Few great people come within this category.

I have never desired to meet people who were thought to be great. I have never desired to meet people who deemed themselves great. Analysed, this means I am no rubber-neck. All religion is based on rubber-necking. This is the fundamental insincerity of the adoration business. It is worthless because it lacks substance and foundation. Few worshippers have stamina. Ernest Hunter was a De Leon rubberneck, who was received as one of the chief disciples within the charmed circle. He attended to the master's meals and hospitality. Within two years he was an avowed labour faker and political climber. In Scotland, Neil MacLean was in the same category. He lasted a slightly longer distance but abandoned his master also within a comparatively short time. I would say he was the more successful Judas, thanks to the I.L.P. and the organised stupidity of the "Red Clyde". He could not resist the call of the fleshpots. De Leon was too fatuous to appreciate the small worth of the persons with whom he worked. He felt that he was one of the great—a born dictator—saviour—and he lived to be surrounded by his disciples.

I was not born to be a disciple. I have no desire to meet the great. I was born for enquiry, struggle, and equality. I have no time for worship. Consequently, all my days I have belonged to the awkward squad. I have antagonised the leaders of the various groupings with which I have made contact. This explains why I viewed De Leon and his immediate disciples critically. I gazed at them with some humorous aloofness. Directly he did not influence my destiny. Indirectly he disturbed my environment.

De Leon did not understand that the village of Clerkenwell, and its neighbouring village of Islington, were really revolutionary world centres. This vision of what really was the fact never entered into his consciousness. He came to London and paid tribute to Marx's grave—an absurd performance when considered properly. This is the piece of the true cross business all over again. I am quite sure that he regarded Socialism as part of the United States constitution in a most prosaic and legal sense, without any romantic touch

or flair. He was the epitome of all that was dull and correct. So proper! So thoroughly devoid of elan. So fearful of the disturbance of insurrection.

De Leon did not influence me at this time. But his disciples were busy undermining the S.D.F. at the time that I became connected with this organisation. His influence had caused a double split. Two quite different groupings had resulted, each styled by the official Social Democrats "Impossibilists". There was the De Leon faction, which functioned in Glasgow and Edinburgh mostly, and also in Northumberland. A little later, the S.L.P., both in Britain and in U.S.A., split into two factions: one semi-parliamentarian, and the other, purely industrialist.

At the time that I joined the S.D.F., the S.L.P. had not divided itself into two bodies. The other group that broke away from the S.D.F. became pure Social Democratic parliamentarians, opposed intellectually to that reformism which is an essential character of parliamentarism. This faction styled itself somewhat arrogantly, the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Today, it still exists and has small groupings in Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and U.S.A.

19. S.D.F. CALENDAR

Please To Remember!
—OLD BALLAD

In 1905, the S.D.F. started to publish quite an interesting *Socialist Annual*. This included an impartial and important calendar of very mixed value. Revolutionary events were noted side by side with opportunist plottings and reformist struggles. I read this annual for four years and have a copy in front of me as I write. I have noted in this chapter some of the incidents recorded because they impressed me at the time. Whatever the reformist opportunism of the S.D.F. as a political organisation, this calendar has inspired me to libertarian thought and action. Modern parliamentarism will not regard some of the dates as ones for the working class to remember. I delighted in them away back fifty years ago. I still consider the record worthy of remembrance.

HISTORICAL S.D.F. CALENDAR

Dates for the Working Class to Remember

JANUARY

1, 1882: Democratic Federation (later S.D.F.) formed.
1881: Blanqui, French Revolutionist, died.
2, 1889: Constitution of Austrian Social-Democracy at Hainfeld.
4, 1642: Attempted arrest of Five Members.
5, 1875: Suppression of German Labour Party.
8, 1883: Kropotkin and others tried for Insurrection at Lyons.
9, 1905: Louise Michel died.
10, 1642: Flight of Charles II. from London.
12, 1893: I.L.P. formed at Bradford.
13, 1840: Frost and other Chartists sentenced to transportation.
14, 1858: Orsini attempts the life of Napoleon III.
18, 1888: John Burns and Cunninghame Graham sentenced for "rioting".
1902: Commandant Scheepers shot for rebellion.
19, 1884: First number of *Justice* appears.
1865: Proudhon, French Socialist, died.
1661: Thomas Venner, leader of English Anabaptists, executed.
21, 1798: Louis XVI. of France executed.
1870: Herzen, Russian Socialist, died.
22, 1905: Massacre of workers under Father Gapon at St. Petersburg.
23, 1869: Ernest Jones, Chartist, died.
1863: Insurrection in Poland.
24, 1899: General Federation of Trade Unions formed.
25, 1871: Weitling, German Communist, died.
28, 1861: Herzegovina revolts against Turkey.
1906: 29 Labour men returned to the House of Commons.
30, 1649: King Charles I. beheaded.
31, 1828: Ipsilanti, leader of Greek Revolution, died.

FEBRUARY

2, 1904: Antonio Labriola, Italian Socialist, died.
1868: Ledru Rollin, French Socialist, died.

3, 1899: Finland robbed of her liberties.
1881: Suspension of 33 Irish members in the House of Commons.
4, 1839: First Chartist Convention meets.
5, 1881: Thomas Carlyle died.
1880: Dynamite explosion in the Czar's Palace.
6, 1649: House of Lords abolished.
1878: General Trepoff shot by Vera Sassoulitch.
1900: Peter Lavroff died.
7, 1883: First meeting of the Irish National League.
1840: The Communist Club in London opened.
8, 1886: Unemployed riots in London.
1849: Roman republic proclaimed.
1587: Mary Stuart beheaded.
9, 1600: Giordano Bruno, Italian Free-thinker, burned at the stake.
10, 1842: Ten Hours Bill passed.
11, 1873: Republic proclaimed in Spain.
1898: Bourtzeff sentenced at Old Bailey for inciting to kill the Czar.
12, 1401: Lollards proscribed by Parliament.
13, 1835: "Orator" Hunt died.
1536: John of Leyden, King of the Anabaptists, executed.
15, 1906: L.R.C. assume the name of Labour Party.
16, 1885: S.D.F. meeting of unemployed on Thames Embankment.
17, 1905: Grand Duke Sergius blown up by bomb.
1904: Chinese Ordinance issued.
18. 1564: Martin Luther died.
19, 1839: Fieschi, conspirator, executed.
1619: Vanini burned at the stake as Atheist.
1903: Anti-Anarchist Legislation in the U.S.
21, 1803: Despard and others executed for conspiracy.
22, 1840: Bebel born.
23, 1848: Revolution in France.
1820: Cato Street Conspiracy.
24, 1906: First Labour men elected in Canada.
25, 1601: Earl of Essex beheaded.
26, 1867: Bebel elected first Socialist to the North German Diet.
27, 1900: First Conference of the Labour Representation Committee.

MARCH

1, 1843: Feargus O'Connor tried for sedition.
2, 1492: Expulsion of Jews from Spain.
4, 1861: Serfdom abolished in Russia.
5, 1883: Foote and Kempe sentenced for blasphemous libel.
6, 1848: Chartist meeting in Trafalgar Square broken up by the police.
7, 1842: H. M. Hyndman born.
10, 1872: Mazzini died.
12, 1895: Anti-Socialist Bill in the German Reichstag.
13, 1848: Revolution in Vienna.
Adult Suffrage meeting in Holborn Town Hall.
14, 1883: Karl Marx died.
1881: Alexander II. of Russia killed.
17, 1851: Robert Blatchford born.
1628: Petition of Rights.
18, 1871: The Commune of Paris.
1848: Revolution in Berlin.
1906: Johann Most died.
19, 1906: Lieutenant Schmidt, leader of the Sevastapol mutiny, executed.
20, 1852: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published.
21, 1639: Campanella died.
1871: German Reichstag first opened.
22, 1794: Hebert, Cloots and other Communists executed.
23, 1885: Insurrection in Canada under Louis Riel.
25, 1807: Slave Trade abolished.
1801: Emperor Paul I. of Russia strangled by courtiers.
26, 1793: Committee of Public Safety formed in France.
28, 1884: Socialist Congress at Roubaix, attended by delegates from S.D.F.
30, 1893: Eleanor Marx died.

APRIL

2, 1791: Mirabeau died.
1905: Meunier, creator of the "Monument to Labour", died.
3, 1871: Flourens shot by the Versaillese.
4, 1892: Walsall Anarchists sentenced.
5, 1842: Full Suffrage Conf. at Birmingham.
1794: Danton guillotined.
6, 1821: Greek War of Independence.
1789: Washington first President of U.S.
7, 1836: Godwin, author of *Political Justice*, died.
1871: The Guillotine burnt by the Communards.
1875: Herwegh, Socialist poet, died.
10, 1848: Chartists' Meeting at Kennington Green.
1886: Hyndman, Burns, Williams and Champion acquitted on their trial for seditious conspiracy.
11, 1903: "Impossibilists" expelled the S.D.F.

12, 1903: Jewish Massacre at Kishineff.
1838: Canadian Rebels hanged by Lord Durham.
13, 1861: American Civil War breaks out.
14, 1849: Proclamation of Hungarian Independence.
1865: President Lincoln assassinated.
15, 1902: Russian Minister, Sipiaguin, killed by Balmashoff.
16, 1881: Sophia Perovsky, Zheliaboff and others hanged.
17, 1866: First attempt (Karakosoff's) on the life of the Czar.
1790: Benjamin Franklin died.
19, 1824: Byron died.
20, 1653: Cromwell closes Long Parliament.
21, 1798: Trial of O'Coigley and others of the Corresponding Society.
23, 1895: Kaiser dubs the Socialists "Fellows without Fatherland".
24, 1792: The "Marseillaise" composed by Rouget de Lisle.
1905: Socialist Unity in France.
25, 1792: The Guillotine first employed.
26, 1904: First Labour Ministry in Australia.
29, 1765: Committal of John Wilkes to the Tower.

MAY

1, 1820: Cato Street Conspirators executed.
2, 1906: Sweating Trades Exhibition at Queen's Hall.
4, 1798: Irish Rebellion.
5, 1789: Opening of the Estates-General in France.
6, 1882: Phoenix Park "murders".
7, 1716: Septennial Act.
8, 1838: People's Charter proclaimed.
1660: Monarchy restored in England.
1878: John Stuart Mill died.
9, 1877: Meeting of the International at Geneva.
10, 1906: Opening of the first Russian Parliament.
1857: Indian Mutiny begins.
11, 1878: German Socialists hunted down by Bismarck.
15, 1847: Daniel O'Connell died.
1525: Thomas Münzer, Anabaptist, executed.
16, 1902: Balmashoff executed for killing Sipiaguin.
17, 1852: Last Chartist Conference (in Manchester).
18, 1804: Napoleon I. proclaims himself emperor.
19, 1825: Saint-Simon died.
20, 1347: Rienzi, last of the Roman Tribunes, died.
21, 1358: Peasant Revolt ("Jacquerie") commences in France.
22, 1906: Unity of the Russian Social-Democracy.
1885: Victor Hugo died.
23, 1905: Kalayeff hanged for killing Grand Duke Sergius.
1498: Savonarola burnt at the stake.
24, 1906: Ibsen died.
25, 1871: Delescluze, the Communard, shot.
26, 1879: Ossinsky, Rus. revolutionist, hanged.
27, 1679: Habeas Corpus Act.
1797: Babœuf executed.
21, 1871: Massacre of Communards at Père Lachaise.
29, 1660: Charles II. enters London.
30, 1906: Michael Davitt died.
1416: Jerome of Prague burnt.
31, 1906: Bomb thrown at King Alfonso on wedding day.

JUNE

1, 1905: Bomb thrown at King Alfonso and President Loubet in Paris.
1868: First Trades Union Congress (in Manchester).
1882: Garibaldi died.
6, 1568: Egmont and Hoorn, Netherlands patriots, executed.
7, 1832: First Reform Bill.
1905: Proclamation of Norwegian independence.
1876: Georges Sand died.
8, 1906: Revolution in Poland.
10. 1381: Insurrection of Wat Tyler.
1903: Servian Royal Family slaughtered.
11, 1882: First S.D.F. demonstration in London.
12, 1845: Herbert Burrows born.
14, 1839: First Chartist petition presented in the House of Commons by Attwood.
15, 1215: Magna Charta signed.
1381: Wat Tyler killed.
16, 1836: London Working Men's Association formed by Lovett.
17, 1904: General Bobrikoff, the oppressor of Finland, killed.
18, 1835: William Cobbett died.
19, 1829: London police formed.
20. 1792: Louis XVI puts on the cap of liberty.
21, 1802: First Factory Act in England.
1906: Ministers expelled from First Duma.
22, 1899: Millerand enters Waldeck-Rousseau's Ministry.
23, 1848: Rising of the Proletariat in Paris.

1880: Bradlaugh imprisoned by order of the House of Commons.
24, 1894: President Carnot killed.
25, 1906: Formation of First Social-Democratic group in the Duma.
26, 1846: Corn Laws repealed.
27, 1450: Jack Cade's Insurrection.
1905: Russian battleship *Potemkin* joins the Revolution.
28, 1906: The flogging and execution of the Denshawai prisoners.
1877: Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant sentenced for publishing the *Fruits of Philosophy*.
29, 1881: Johann Most sentenced at Old Bailey for libelling the Czar.
30, 1837: Pillories abolished.

JULY

1, 1876: Michael Bakunin died.
2, 1855: Sunday Trading Bill riots.
1798: J. J. Rousseau died.
4. 1905: Peasants' revolt in Russia.
1776: Proclamation of American Independence.
5, 1888: Strike of matchgirls in East End.
6, 1825: Fall of the Combination Laws.
1535: Sir Thomas More, author of *Utopia*, beheaded.
7, 1415: John Huss burnt at the stake.
8, 1809: Thomas Paine died.
1822: P. B. Shelley drowned.
10, 1848: Ernest Jones imprisoned for seditious agitation.
1584: William of Orange assassinated.
11, 1882: Alexandria bombarded.
13, 1793: Marat assassinated by Charlotte Corday.
14, 1789: The storming of the Bastille.
1889: First International Socialist Congress in Paris.
15, 1381: John Ball hanged.
16, 1647: Masaniello, Neapolitan revolutionist, executed.
17, 1906: First Inter-Parliamentary Socialist Conference in London.
18, 1572: The Netherlands Revolution.
21, 1906: The first Duma dispersed.
22, 1901: Taff Vale judgment.
23, 1906: The Vyborg Manifesto of first Duma.
1866: Reform riots in Hyde Park.
1854: E. Belfort Bax born.
25, 1847: Brothers Bandieri and other Neapolitan conspirators shot on information supplied by Lord Palmerston.
26, 1826: Pestel and other "Decembrists" hanged.
27, 1847: Feargus O'Connor elected to Parliament.
1830: Revolution in Paris.
28, 1794: Robespierre guillotined.
1904: Plehve killed.
29, 1900: King Humbert of Italy killed.
1835: Michael Sadler died.
31, 1906: Russian Deputy Hertzenstein assassinated by the Black Hundreds.

AUGUST

1, 1834: Slavery ends in British Colonies.
2, 1789: Aristocracy abolished in France.
3, 1546: Etienne Dolet burnt at the stake in Paris.
4, 1884: Democratic Association assumes the name of S.D.F.
1844: Public debate between Feargus O'Connor and Cobden at Nottingham.
5, 1895: Engels died.
6, 1893: International Socialist Congress at Zürich.
1905: Longuet, the Communard, died.
7, 1900: Wilhelm Liebknecht died.
8. 1877: Lovett died.
9, 1906: International Women's Congress at Copenhagen.
10, 1792: Flight of Louis XVI. from Paris.
14, 1904: International Socialist Congress at Amsterdam.
15, 1867: Second Reform Bill.
1889: Dockers' Strike.
1839: Trial of Rev. J. R. Stephens at Chester.
1856: J. Keir Hardie born.
16, 1819: "Peterloo" Massacre.
1901: International Socialist Congress at Brussels.
17, 1878: General Mezentzeff killed by Stepniak.
19, 1875: Unity Congress of the German Social-Democrats at Gotha.
22, 1861: Richard Oastler died.
1900: Cluseret, Communard, died.
23, 1305: William Wallace executed.
24, 1833: The word "Socialism" first used by *Poor Man's Guardian*.
1572: Massacre of St. Bartholomew in Paris.
25, 1867: Marx's *Capital* appears.
1906: Dynamite attempt against Stolypin.
26, 1906: Min, the suppressor of the Moscow insurrection, killed.
27, 1549: Ket defeated by Earl of Warwick.
28, 1833: Slavery abolished by Act of Parliament.
29, 1657: John Lilburne died.

30, 1855: Feargus O'Connor died.
31, 1864: Lassalle died.

SEPTEMBER

1, 1900: S. African Republics extinguished.
3, 1658: Oliver Cromwell died.
1859: Jean Jaurès born.
4, 1850: Austrian General Haynau belaboured by London draymen for flogging women.
1870: Proclamation of the Third French Republic.
5, 1901: President McKinley killed.
6, 1520: *Mayflower* sails from Delft Haven.
7, 1893: Miners shot at Featherstone.
9, 1887: Michelstown riots.
10, 1797: Mary Wollstonecraft died.
1898: Austrian Empress assassinated.
11, 1677: James Harrington, author of *Oceana,* died.
1848: Revolution in Hungary.
12, 1906: Mlle. Konoplianikoff hanged for killing General Min.
13, 1893: Malon, French Socialist, died.
14, 1882: Egypt "temporarily" occupied.
16, 1866: Karakosoff hanged for attempting the life of the Czar.
17, 1837: Buonarotti, Italian Com., died.
20, 1870: End of the temporal power of Pope.
21, 1792: Monarchy abolished in France.
22, 1792: Commencement of revolutionary Calendar in France.
23, 1820: Major Cartwright died.
1900: International Socialist Congress at Paris.
25, 1863: Conference of the International in London.
26, 1815: The Holy Alliance.
28, 1864: The International formed.
29, 1868: Revolution in Spain.
1830: Oastler's first letter on "Slavery in Yorkshire".
30, 1890: Fall of Anti-Soc. laws in Germany.

OCTOBER

1, 1885: Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, the great social reformer, died.
2, 1882: *Neue Zeit,* scientific organ of German Social Democracy, started.
3, 1896: William Morris died.
5, 1789: "Ca ira" first sung in Paris.
6, 1891: Parnell died.
8, 1897: The Jewish "Bund" formed.
1848: Kossuth—Dictator of Hungary.
1837: Charles Fourier died.
9, 1904: Rev. R. J. Campbell hooted in the City Temple.
10, 1792: Title "Citizen" decreed by French Convention.
11, 1901: Commandant Lotter shot for rebellion.
13, 1666: First execution of the "regicides".
15, 1817: Kosciusko, Polish revolutionist, died.
16, 1793: Marie Antoinette executed.
1854: Karl Kautsky born.
19, 1906: Equal Rights granted to peasants in Russia.
21, 1878: Anti-Socialist Law in Germany.
23, 1905: General Strike in Russia.
24, 1879: French Labour Party formed by Guesde.
25, 1906: F. A. Sorge, last Secretary of the International, died.
27, 1882: Insurrection at Lyons (Kropotkin and others).
29, 1831: Bristol riots.
1897: Henry George died.
30, 1905: Constitution proclaimed in Russia.
1889: Chernishevsky, Russian Socialist thinker, died.
31, 1793: Execution of Girondists.

NOVEMBER

1, 1905: Jewish massacres all over Russia.
2, 1689: Bill of Rights passed.
3, 1640: Long Parliament assembled.
4, 1839: Chartists' insurrection at Newport.
1774: Declaration of Rights in America.
1905: Finland regains her freedom through a general strike.
6, 1887: Pottier, composer of the *International,* died.
8, 1793: Mme. Rolland guillotined.
9, 1905: First Social-Democratic daily in Russia.
1856: Cabet, author of *Voyage to Icaria,* d.
10, 1793: Worship of Reason in France.
11, 1887: Chicago Anarchists hanged.
1845: Jules Guesde born.
12, 1880: Captain Boycott besieged at Lough Mark Farm.
13, 1887: "Bloody Sunday" in Trafalgar Sq.
14, 1812: Luddite riots.
15, 1816: Spa Fields meetings.
16. 1802: Despard's conspiracy.
1848: Insurrection in Rome.
1885: Riel and other Canadian conspirators, executed.
17, 1858: Robert Owen died.
18, 1905: Norway elects a King.
19, 1904: First Zemstvo Congress in Moscow demands Constitution.
20, 1899: Anti-Strike Bill thrown out in German Reichstag.

21, 1831: Hunger revolt at Lyons.
22, 1906: Czar issues a ukase breaking up the village communities.
23, 1867: Manchester Martyrs hanged.
1891: Kaiser admonishes the troops to shoot their fathers and mothers when necessary.
24, 1572: John Knox died.
1898: Anti-Anarchist Conference in Rome.
25, 1795: Extinction of the Kingdom of Poland.
26, 1549: Trial of Ket for rebellion.
28, 1905: Sevastapol in hands of mutineers.
29. 1905: Second General Strike in Russia.
30, 1900: Oscar Wilde died.

DECEMBER

1, 1641: Grand Remonstrance presented.
2, 1851: Coup d'etat by Napoleon III.
1859: John Brown hanged.
4, 1803: Spanish Inquisition suppressed by Napoleon I.
5, 1879: First Proclamation by the *Narodnaya Volya.*
6, 1884: Third Reform Bill.
1905: Separation of State and Church in France.
1882: Louis Blanc died.
7, 1896: Maceo, leader of the Cuban Revolution, died.
8, 1643: John Pym died.
9. 1898: W. G. Pearson killed by accident.
1842: Peter Kropotkin born.
10, 1895: Universal Suffrage abolished in Saxony.
1520: Martin Luther burns the Papal bull.
11, 1905: John Burns takes office in Liberal Government.
12, 1906: Constitution granted to Transvaal.
1838: Torchlight meetings of the Chartists suppressed.
13, 1867: Fenian explosion in Clerkenwell Prison.
14, 1799: Washington died.
16, 1653: Cromwell—Protector.
1773: The people of Boston throw the chests of tea into the sea.
17, 1830: Bolivar, liberator of South America, died.
18, 1792: Thomas Paine convicted for the *Rights of Man.*
1862: Slavery abolished in United States.
19, 1890: Cæsar De Paepe, Belgian Socialist, died.
20, 1860: Secession of the Southern States.
21, 1895: Stepniak killed by railway accident.
22, 1905: Insurrection in Moscow.
1906: Count Ignatieff killed.
23, 1864: J. Bronterre O'Brien died.
1688: James II. expelled from England.
24, 1884: Bradlaugh's Oaths Bill.
25, 1846: *Song of the Shirt* published.
26, 1907: W. M. Thompson of *Reynolds* died.
27, 1825: Conspiracy of the "Decembrists" in St. Petersburg.
29, 1905: Moscow insurrection suppressed.
31, 1384: John Wycliffe died.

As I have said this calendar inspired me to be loyal to the workers' struggle in the fullest sense of the term. As one responsible for its publication, and seeing it circulated at his party's meetings, one would have thought that Harry Quelch would have been impelled by this factual record of historic struggle to prove himself a true Social Revolutionst. Nothing of the kind happened. On the contrary, at the very moment when this calendar was being distributed, Harry Quelch was consorting with the militarists and war-mongers, and enemies of the working-class.

On Tuesday evening, July 23, 1907, Harry Quelch went to Woolwich to speak as a patriot and to advocate conscription. He addressed a meeting under the auspices of the National Service League. The chief patrons of this League were Lord Roberts and Viscount Milner.

The League official report of this meeting said:

Mr. H. Quelch, the well-known leader of the Social Democratic Federation, spoke quite pointedly in favour of the official resolution, and against a purely Socialist amendment. Mr. Quelch said:

"Socialist Parties all over the world are in favour of military training.
"The motto of Socialism is 'Ours for us.'
"I am a patriot. I believe in the maintenance of our national institutions."

The secretary of this aristocratic League in conclusion said: "Mr. Quelch's speech is the backbone of the evening."

The amendment Quelch spoke against, and which was defeated, read:

That, considering the necessity of a constructive and practical conception of national service, instead of the destructive and sentimental conception of the military and governing classes;

Considering further that military training already absorbs much of the disciplined energy of the nation without directing it to constructive works of national and international service;

And, considering that military training, and particularly military training of the young, instead of leading to lives of national and international service, encourages a vague, sentimental patriotism which must be distinguished from the true sentiment of definite patriotism;

This meeting of citizens in the Metropolitan Borough of Woolwich strongly condemns any attempt to introduce military training into our educational system.

At the General Election of 1906, as I have proved, Harry Quelch entered into a conspiracy with Robert Donald, editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, to force me to assist the Liberals in the election. His activity forced me out of Fleet Street because I insisted on remaining a Socialist. This treachery he followed up with his pro-conscriptionist activity, which reaction has fastened on the world. What a disgraceful, cowardly, murderous business!

20. S.P.G.B. FORMED

The Impossibilists must be expelled.
—HARRY QUELCH

After the Socialist League adventurism, there was no split in the S.D.F. until 1902. In August of that year, *The Socialist* began to appear in Scotland, published by the Scottish members of the S.D.F. The third issue contained an attack on the leaders of the S.D.F., and their policy. This was signed "Impossibilist". In consequence, "Impossibilist" became the official term of abuse, for the critics became "Impossibilists". Embittered, they made their writing more and more hostile towards the official elements. A split was inevitable and in 1903, the Socialist Labour Party was organised, an exact British copy of the U.S.A. body.

Justice was the official organ of the S.D.F., but it was owned privately. That has been the case with many organisations. *Freedom* claimed to be the organ of Anarchism but it was privately owned. *The Freethinker* was and is privately owned, although it claims to be the organ of the National Secular Society. The private ownership of *The Anarchist* in Glasgow, whilst claiming to speak in the name of the movement, was almost a scandal. It was closed down in a most arbitrary fashion. In the case of *Justice*, the party had no control over the paper, although the paper claimed to speak in the name of the movement. Its attitude towards Keir Hardie, the I.L.P., and the Labour Party was most unsatisfactory. Actually, it was all over the shop.

There were heated discussions at the 1902 Conference of the S.D.F. and Hyndman was attacked for the all-party public banquet held in his honour. That year P. Friedberg and the Finsbury Park branch were expelled because Friedberg wrote a criticism in *The Weekly People*, New York, and was supported by his branch. The matter was referred to the 1903 Conference and G. S. Yates was expelled for supporting Friedberg, and writing articles in *The Socialist* criticising the S.D.F. leaders. The volume of criticism became stronger during 1903. The correspondence in *Justice* increased down to 1904, and Hyndman, Quelch, Lee and Max Beer came in for vigorous denunciation. Matters came to a head at the 1904 Conference, which opened at Burnley on Friday, April 1st. The E.C. made a report against the "Impossibilists". Much discussion followed. The next day, Herbert Burrows moved an emergency resolution, demanding that those who were criticising constantly the E.C., be required to apologise to the Conference and pledge themselves, without any reservations whatever, that such conduct would cease. This was carried by 56 votes to 6. The six were then called upon for an explanation or an apology. None of them apologised.

After hearing their explanation two of them were expelled and left the Conference. They were J. Fitzgerald and H. J. Hawkins, candidates for the new E.C. Some of the delegates present (who had voted for their expulsion) had been instructed to vote for their candidature.

The official group complained that the "Impossibilist" movement was a campaign of calumny and intrigue against old and experienced members and therefore against the entire body. They appealed to the Conference on the sentimental grounds of age, connections, and years in the struggle.

The two members expelled were delegates from Branches who had received instructions to vote on certain items on the Agenda dealing with questions of policy. They were expelled before the items came up. The significant fact was that both had been nominated for the E.C. by several Branches, and therefore constituted a menace to the old official group. In fact, at a subsequent meeting of London members, J. Kent stated that he was present when the expulsions were arranged by Hyndman, Quelch and company around the tea-table on the evening of the first day of the Conference.

The action of Herbert Burrows was "according to plan". It showed how little democracy counted for in the S.D.F., when the ruling clique found its wishes opposed.

After the Conference the Watford Branch wrote to the Executive asking why their delegate (Fitzgerald) had been expelled. They were informed that unless they too complied with the Conference findings on the question of criticism they also would be expelled.

The official group had carried the Conference with them, and secured a vote giving them power (for three years) to expel members and Branches who were not prepared to give unqualified support to the Executive in all it did.

After the return of the delegates from the Burnley Conference, a meeting of London members of the S.D.F. was held on Sunday, April 24, 1904, at Shoreditch Town Hall, to discuss the expulsions and matters arising therefrom. On the plea that they were no longer members of the organisation, Fitzgerald and Hawkins were excluded from the hall.

At this meeting there were two surprises: Jack Jones—later a Labour M.P.—who had given indications of supporting the so-called "Impossibilists", backed down and supported the official group; Jack Kent, who was thought to be hand-in-glove with the Executive (of which he had been a member), gave the game away and told of the wire-pulling to get rid of the more dangerous of the critics.

After several hours of heated discussion, the meeting supported the official attitude by a vote of 119 to 83.

Following the Shoreditch meeting, a Protest Committee was formed, which issued a leaflet setting forth the grounds of dissatisfaction with the existing policy of the S.D.F. It was signed by 88 members.

The signatories to the leaflet urged:

The adoption of an uncompromising attitude which admits of no arrangements with any section of the capitalist party; nor permits any compromise with any individual or party not recognising the class war as a basic principle, and not prepared to work for the overthrow of the present capitalist system. Opposition to all who are not openly and avowedly working for the realisation of Social Democracy. A remodelled organisation, wherein the Executive shall be mainly an administrative body, the policy and tactics to be determined and controlled by the entire organisation. The Party Organ to be owned, controlled and run by the Party. The individual member to have the right to claim protection of the whole organisation against tyrannical decisions.

Such was the avowed position put forward in 1904 by those who eventually founded the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

After the issue of this leaflet, events moved rapidly. The official group continued their expulsions from the S.D.F. A meeting of sympathisers with the policy outlined in the leaflet was held at Sydney Hall, Battersea, on May 15, 1904 and at that meeting it was decided to launch a Party based entirely upon Socialist principles and opposed to all other political parties. A meeting to constitute the Party formally was held at the Printers' Hall, Bartlett's Passage, Fetter Lane, E.C., on Sunday, June 12, 1904. Such was the formation of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

The new Party was forced into existence without literature, offices, printing facilities or funds, apart from the contributions of the 120 members who took part in its formation. Its early Executive meetings were held in the bedroom of one of the members, his bed providing the main seating accommodation. The members entered with enthusiasm and energy into the work of building up an organisation, and had the satisfaction of seeing the first number of *The Socialist Standard* appear on September 3, 1904, containing the

Object and Declaration of Principles that has guided the Party ever since.

The first Annual Conference was held at the Communist Club (now defunct), 107, Charlotte Street, London, on April 29, 1905. The membership had by then reached 150.

My reaction to this party and its leaders will be discussed in later chapters.

21. AN OPEN MIND

The atrocious crime of being a young man.
—WILLIAM PITT

In one of his famous South Place addresses, delivered about three years before I was born, Moncure Conway stated that there existed a myth of biography which taught that the stages of a man's life were birth, early manhood, mature manhood, and death. Youth and old age were ignored. I gathered that even Conway inclined to endorse this classification. In my own time, this view has been advanced by renegade or despairing pioneers of Socialism and Freethought.

Thomas Johnston made his name by opposition to war and secured his position by upholding and toadying to royalty in a way quite contrary to his early writing. I never admired his radical writing which was coarse, at times, and cheap. Still, he explained away not its coarseness, but the truth it contained by pretending that he had "mellowed with age". This was an impertinent and stupid assertion to the effect that it was virtuous and beautiful to cease from thinking. It implied that there was a kindness, almost a compassion, a growth of character that induced mellowness and made one lapse into decrepitude. A dastardly position.

John S. Clarke explained away his *Satires, Lyrics and Poems* by saying that they were a product of his callow youth. They were nothing of the kind. And, anyway, he would have no place in the movement but for the products of his "callow" youth.

G. W. Foote established a paper to attack and denounce Bradlaugh. He was twenty-six at the time. Later he succeeded and eulogised Bradlaugh. It is said in his defence that he did this in his youth, implying that he was too young to think at twenty-six. Which is sheer nonsense and hypocrisy. The original attack, and the later retreat, were explained neither by youth nor age, but by mean, contemptible self-interest. His thinking was secondary to a place in the sun.

In the course of my life I have discovered that many folk explain away their early integrities as a crime of youth. Apparently, there is a conspiracy to perpetuate this myth of biography in our alleged age of true scientific understanding and approach. My experience challenges and denies the studied falsehood of this notion. Many comrades object to my dwelling on the thought, sayings, and writing of my youth. Why not? I have not changed. What I stated so vigorously as a Freethinker, a Socialist, and a Republican at eighteen is my view today. I have not changed my thought and I do not wish to vary the statement. I do not accept the mythology of biography. I believe in youth. Birth and death are unfortunate facts, the beginning and end of one's life. Youth is a vital fact and not something to be dismissed contemptuously. Old age, in a well-ordered life, should have much in common with youth. It should be a matured vitality. The average complacent self-seeker, his hunger for status satisfied, ensconsed in some place of security and recognition, regards old age as a period of non-adventure. It is near closing time. The life is ended. This is not the outlook of a human being but the settling down to annihilation of a mere beast. And that is what most of our great statesmen and divines become in their old age—slumbering beasts, poor worldly animals curling up in comfort for their utter annihilation. They have been pretenders from the cradle and all their days devoid of true life-force.

It is necessary to express this understanding of the importance of youth at this stage, for youth, and my development in youth, constitute the story I am unfolding.

From the age of thirteen to that of eighteen I was thinking straight, for I was thinking against war and priestcraft. I was developing the idea that I had to think for myself. At no time, during that period, was I afraid to deny the existence of God if I felt

God did not exist. Even when I believed in God I saw nothing wrong in the person who challenged his existence. My view on the subject of Atheism matured in my youth. Even in my most religious boyhood, before I became a Boy Preacher even, I felt that the orthodox believer spoke with the scepticism of a fundamental Atheism rather than with assurance of a true Theistic believer. I certainly sympathised with Confucius and Gautama for being Atheists but only because this brought a kind of despair into their lives. I never doubted their fundamental goodness of purpose. Only they worked bravely and truly but without hope. It seemed to me, then, to be a rather mournful business. I still feel that life is a mournful business—a little consciousness between sleeps, one that never was, and the other that is eternal. I never felt any sympathy with the orthodox views of the persons with whom I associated. Indeed, their entire attitude seemed to me to be entirely opposed to the Bible.

In the Old Testament, the author of Ecclesiastes clearly does not believe in a future life. In most beautiful language he challenges the idea of immortality and, with scant philosophic respect, brushes aside the idea of God. References to the deity, when analysed, are poetical only, and not intended to be real or factual.

In the New Testament, Jesus never said an unkind word against the Sadducees for not believing in a future life. He does not object to the atheism of their philosophy but only to the fact that they disbelieve in the righteousness of the social struggle. They are on the side of established authority. That is their offence. Jesus denounced the Pharisees in unmeasured terms for their belief and pretensions. The Sadducees may have been callous and wrong but they had an integrity in their attitude which commended itself to Jesus. For the Pharisees he had no mercy. They added hypocrisy to callousness. Their crime was unforgiveable.

For these reasons I have felt, consistently, since I was a boy that the orthodox Christians pursued with persecution the Atheist in a manner utterly foreign to the teaching of the Bible. And their attitude was an insult to God, if God existed. Atheism was deemed to be worse than immorality, almost worse than murder or treason. Is this not nonsense?

If God exists, his existence does not cease because some mortal being queries the fact. The existence of God does not depend on any man's belief or unbelief. It is either a fact or it is not. Nor is there any evidence that God's happiness turns on any man's belief in his existence. God would be a very miserable creature if he took to weeping because some human doubted his existence. The Bible nowhere suggests that God is offended by human disbelief. If he were sensitive it would be to the use of his name on the U.S.A. coinage or something like that, which makes him a camp-follower of power and a symbol of oppression. It is the believer who mocks God, not the unbeliever.

I held this idea in my youth. I hold it with equal strength still. My youth was never callow. My age has not mellowed me. I hurl this truth at those who employ such arguments or apologies.

I started writing manifestos which I published when I was sixteen years old. Two years later I started my campaign of writing letters to the editor. Most of my letters were published. I continued this activity for thirty-five years. Then it ceased. At the moment, I cannot think why. I published a selection of these epistles in 1939 under the title of *Letters to the Editor (1904-1939)*.

I direct attention, in this chapter, to some of the letters that I wrote between 1904 and 1906 because they throw light on my mental evolution. They relate not merely to my thought but to my active expression of that thought. They emphasise the vital importance and dignity of youth. They challenge the myth of normal biography.

Letters to the Editor deserve to rank as essays in revolt. They are attempts to invade the surrounding secular world of unbelief, or of different belief, which one influences and penetrates only through the medium of secular association. Such efforts to enlighten the profane world receive a wider circulation and consideration than the essay printed in the party journal, or the propaganda pamphlet, which commands the limited attention of a world within the world. The pamphlet or essay may exert, finally, tremendous influence. The *Letter to the Editor* may start a widespread train of thought.

The study which arose out of the enquiry that caused me to pass from Christianity to Atheism through Theism inspired a great desire for discussion. My experience as a seeker after social and political truth as a Social Democrat also developed a love of thought-exchange. It was impossible for me

to close my mind as De Leon did or the Socialist Party of Great Britain founders did. I had no time for such narrow sectarianism. It seemed so poverty-stricken. There was a want of richness in such an attitude that appalled me. My youthful experience had converted me to a firm belief in the need for an open mind.

Evidence of that open-mind is found in the letters to the editor.

22. *"LETTERS TO THE EDITOR"*

I believe in the power of the press.
—EARL ROSEBERY, April, 1913

I have decided to leave the letters as they appeared, with headings, dates, and signature, as published in the paper in the first instance. I merely cut out the address from all letters after the first one in which it appeared, since the address was the same in each instance. Repeating the name is done not from vanity—it is silly to wish to write one's name down a thousand times—but from accuracy. The reader can see at the glance the letter as it originally appeared.

Agnostic Journal, London, December 10, 1904

CHRISTIAN v. ANTI-CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY

Sir—Mr. W. R. Bradlaugh, in *The Christian's Armoury* for December, after having proved that he considers "discretion the better part of valour" by informing "Manchester", in his "Answers to Correspondents", that the wisest course for Christians to adopt is to Boycott Secular meetings, makes the following assertion:

"'Discussion invited', which is printed on their (Secularist's) bills, simply means discussion avoided, unless the opponent happened to be ignorant of the doings of the Secular party for the past ten years or more. If these men are really pining for a fight, let them come to London, and fight the battle on neutral ground. The whole of the proceeds, after paying rent of hall, printing, advertising, and necessary expenses, to be given to the London hospitals."

Excellent! Truly, this is another Daniel come to judgment!

Now, sir, nothing would suit me better than to accept these terms of Mr. Bradlaugh, and, if he desires that "by their fruits we should know them", to compare the contentions of the Christian Church with the contentions of the Secular Party; the crimes of the former with the crimes(?) of the latter; and the blessings bestowed upon mankind by the cult of Jesus with the advantages of Secularism, as presented by Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, and Saladin, not forgetting G. W. Foote, Chapman Cohen and others. And I do so all the more readily, because, from the third Sunday in April to the second in November, I conducted, mostly at my own expense, a Freethought mission in Clerkenwell, besides making a similar suggestion myself in the *Enfield Chronicle* of April 25th, 1903, on the occasion of challenging the Rev. J. Bedworth Jones to a debate. The words I then used were:

"If publicly, then let the public be charged for admittance to debating hall, the money thereby received to go to some local charity, and the decision to rest with Mr. Jones."

On that occasion, however, the challenge was refused; but I trust that Mr. Bradlaugh will shew a greater temerity than his reverend brother. At any rate, should it be accepted, I can promise to make a gallant effort to do justice to the atrocious crimes, carnage and contentions of the Christian religion, as also to the benefits and advantages which mankind owe to Infidelity and Secularism.

As to his witticism about "Discussion avoided", I can only say that during my occupation of Clerkenwell Green no opponent could lay the charge of want of fairness or fear of honest discussion against me. Nor have I found any instances of the Secular meetings not giving their opponents fair-play, although I have known, and can recall, instances of Freethinkers being barred Christian Evidence platforms, and of Christians rushing Freethought rostrums. This by the way.

In conclusion, may I add that my reason, for addressing myself to the *Agnostic Jour-*

nal only, is because your paper is outside any particular division, and is therefore more representative of my object, *viz.*, to shew that true Secularism, whatever its divisions, tends to the betterment, ennobling, and upliftment of humanity?—Yours truly,

GUY A. ALDRED

The Clarion, London, January 27, 1905

THE "CLARION" IN THE LIBRARIES

To the Editor of the CLARION

Sir—In reply to a letter of mine, dated December 12, 1904, which I addressed to the Town Clerk of the Finsbury Borough Council, offering to place the *Freethinker, Agnostic Journal*, and the *Clarion* upon the library table at my own expense, I have received the following communication from Mr. J. D. Brown, Librarian and Secretary to the Finsbury Public Libraries Committee, dated the 11th inst.:

Dear Sir—I am directed by the Public Libraries Committee to thank you for your offer to present certain periodicals to the library, and to say that they will be pleased to accept the "Agnostic Journal" and the "Clarion", as proposed by you.—I am, yours faithfully, *JAMES DUFF BROWN*

So far as this goes, and considering that the *Literary Guide* is already placed upon the Clerkenwell Public Library table, this is satisfactory. But why this boycott of so strenuous an advocate of freethought and so old a veteran as the *Freethinker?*—I remain, yours fraternally,

GUY A. ALDRED

Agnostic Journal, London, August 12, 1905

MAHOMET

Sir—It has been said that no man has a right to assert that his religion is the only true one until he has studied the personality and teachings of the founders of other so-called "divine revelations". For those who are prepared to act upon this axiom, it would be impossible to find a more interesting book than *The Sayings of Muhammad*, a popular half-a-crown volume published by Constable & Co., and edited by Abdullah Al Mamun Al-Suhrawardy. From the editorial foreword I cull the following description of the great prophet:

Muhammad was a man of imposing presence, of medium height, broad shouldered, and strongly built, with fine features, coal-black hair and eyes, and a long beard. His mental powers were of a high order, his manners reserved yet affable and courteous, his speech laconic and often humorous, a man of strong passions but noble impulses, capable of great love, great generosity, altogether a character of surprising force, capacity, shrewdness, and determination. Temperate and prudent in youth, he gained in manhood the name of "al-Amin", or "the faithful", from his fair and upright dealing. Just and affectionate in private life, he lived in the humblest style in a poor hut, eating the plainest food, lighting his own fire, and mending his own clothes and shoes, having given his slaves their freedom. For months together he would seldom eat a hearty meal, always sharing it with those whose need was greater; a number of the poor lived entirely on his generosity.

Yours truly,

G. A. A.

Daily Mail, London, Wednesday Sept. 6, 1905

SHOULD CLERGYMEN CRITICISE THE BIBLE? A WAY OUT

To the Editor of the *Daily Mail*

Sir—As an ordinary layman I have been delighted with the candour with which so many of your clerical correspondents have written, although it has seemed to me to be a little inconsistent with their ordination vows and nominal adherence to the Thirty-nine Articles.

The question is not, I take it, as to the validity or non-validity of the higher criticism—why not also include the equally iconoclastic lower criticism in our consideration of the question?—but as to whether a cleric, having once promised to diligently teach the duty of an unfeigned belief in the canonical Scriptures, and throughout his ministry pretending an adherence to articles which preclude the right of destructive criticism, has a right to criticise the Bible.

And seeing that he can never honestly put off the clergyman in the matter of judgment, I should answer the question in the negative. Men like Canon Henson, Dean Armitage Robinson, Bishop Gore, Canon Wilson, and Archdeacon Wilberforce have no present right in the Church; and their scholarship and weight are such that were they to take the honest course of resigning in a body, they could bring about the much-needed altera-

tion in its constitution and sixteenth-century Articles.

GUY A. ALDRED

The Freethinker, London, December 17, 1905

A "TORREYITE"

To the Editor of *The Freethinker*

Sir—Under the heading "Sunday Mornings in London", "R.M.S." in the *Daily News* of Monday, December 4 last, describes a visit he paid to the Upper George-street Presbyterian Church, Marylebone, W. of which the Rev. George Hanson, M.A., D.D., is the pastor. The following is from his description of the impression made on him by Dr. Hanson:

The first impression is made by the voice; a deep, rich voice, not various in cadence, nor opulent in modulation, but full of feeling; now throbbing like the string of a 'cello, now pulsating like a cathedral bell. . . . As the service proceeded the impression, which developed into permanence was that of the genuine goodness of the preacher. I have rarely sat under a man who so impressed me with a sense of noble piety. It was impossible to listen to him and not feel that here was an uncommon type, a man whose spiritual circuit was complete, whose conception of the responsibility of his office was humbling in its height, who cherished a holy of holies in his breast. A man of culture, but of more than culture; of wisdom, the wisdom not of the midnight oil, but of the midnight vigil . . . it has rarely been my good fortune to hear a preacher who thought so little of himself and so much of his purpose, who so convincingly and so silently, no less than audibly, proclaimed that for him to live "was Christ".

Taking it for granted that this is a correct delineation of the preacher's style and character, the question arises what is the meaning of "living for Christ", and how does it affect a man's relations with his fellows? This is best answered by recording a little anecdote of the manner in which Dr. Hanson has slandered Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and when brought to book, failed to substantiate his charges. The facts of the case to which I refer are as follows: In June and July this year, Dr. Hanson spoke for the Christian Evidence Society in Hyde Park, and in the course of his lectures he declared that he had evidence in his possession to prove that Mr. Lloyd had been deprived of his office in the Presbyterian ministry on account of his having been found guilty of grave moral offences. His statements subsequently formed the theme of several discourses delivered respectively by Messrs. Baily, Greene and Bryant, from the Christian Evidence platform and under the auspices of that society. These men always referred us to the Pastor of the George Street Presbyterian Church for authoritative details. I accordingly addressed, during last August, two letters to Dr. Hanson and after a delay of nearly a fortnight, received the postcard enclosed, which I transcribe for the benefit of your readers:

If you write to The Clerk, Johannesburg Presbytery, Johannesburg, S. Africa, you will get an official and authentic statement. Castlerock, 21. 8. '05. (Signed) G. HANSON

I accordingly wrote to Johannesburg immediately, but up to the present I have received no reply. Nor do I expect to receive one. I ask your readers, however, to note the cowardly mental gymnastics of this reverend dealer in pious slander when asked to substantiate his charges. And this is the man who impressed the *Daily News* representative with "a sense of noble piety". Possibly the *Daily News* "spiritual circuit" like that of Dr. Hanson's "is complete", which accounts for his appreciation of this "comrade-in-abuse" of Dr. Torrey. At least, one would think he was a fit subject for Evan Roberts' Welsh hysteria.

GUY A. ALDRED

[*We have seen the official document by which Mr. Lloyd was deposed from the Presbyterian Church in South Africa. It contained no reflection upon his personal character. He was simply charged with preaching Atheism. Whenever he renounced his heresy he could apply for reinstatement. —Editor, "Freethinker".*]

Justice, March 31, 1906

"A NEW LABOUR PARTY"

Dear Comrade—As a member of the professional classes referred to in the article which appeared in last week's *Justice*, under the above heading, I should be obliged if you would allow me to say a word in regard to that contribution, and also to pass a criticism upon your leaderette thereon.

In the first place, it seems to me that "Ulla" greatly overstates the case for the "professional" classes, whilst betraying a sad ignorance of the real nature of their work. Let us see.

I note the appeal on behalf of the poor

parson, first. Why should such an individual be allowed or requested to join a union? If he feels a "call" to preach religion in all sincerity—as I do to preach atheism and Socialism—then give him all credit and all freedom of speech; but let him remember that sincerity of purpose is a questionable business asset and he can never prove "a commercial success" under capitalism. This recognised, the existence of the law of supply and demand appreciated, all further need for enlargements on "the working of providence" vanish. In other words, as a parson he is not a *useful* member of the community.

Coming to journalism, I write with some authority on the subject, but I must confess that I fail to see how its paid representatives are the more intelligent and intellectual classes, nor can I appreciate the force of the tribute paid to them by "Ulla", when she says that "by their pen and mental and professional labours they are helping forward social and democratic progress, and are manfully assisting to better the conditions for the skilled and unskilled manual workers, who are now so well represented in Parliament". Combined with a detestable snobbery, so far as I can discover, the total failure to correctly understand the meaning of history, biography, and science aright, makes the journalist a person to be abhorred. Nor is he animated with a sincerity of purpose sufficient to cause him to write for principle and to put that before monetary reward. And even the mass of detailed information which marks the performances of many a "mental day-labourer" is not of the writer's own collecting, but has been filed by a staff of special employees.

For my part, as a writer on, and student of, history, theology and sociology, I know full well that in these days of cant, humbug, and insincerity, I can demand no livelihood as a reward for educating people. For that I must look to other employment. Meanwhile, I can say that I have written nothing that I have feared to put my name to, whilst I find my all-sufficient reward for services rendered in the knowledge that I am driving a few nails into the coffin of modern snobbery and principle-selling.

In conclusion, if the penman would find his social salvation, let him join our ranks; if not, I can assure "Ulla" that no union can increase his "salary"—I was going to say "wages"—and that he must go to the wall.

Yours fraternally, GUY A. ALDRED

Actually, this 1906 letter, dealing with literary professionalism and the Labour Party, was very much to the point. It applies to the situation even more today than it did fifty years ago. Consider the Labour M.P., who, once returned to parliament, becomes a capitalist journalist as a side-line for which he is well-paid. Then again, his status gets him a job on the B.B.C. As a paid broadcaster he senses his importance and so becomes an enemy of street agitation and the use of parks and open-spaces as places of free discussion and the working man's university. The entire struggle of the people has been reduced, by parliamentarism, to a sorry farce.

My early realisation of this fact renders strange the fact that I was an enthusiastic feminist and therefore strongly in favour of women's suffrage.

The Women's Tribune was published in London in 1906. It no longer exists. I forget who published it.

In the columns of this journal for July 2, 1906, there appeared a letter from me, which read in part as follows:

133 Goswell Road, E.C.,
June 24th, 1906

To the Editor of *The Women's Tribune*

Dear Madam—As a socialist lecturer and writer, who has frequently fallen foul, both of his secularist and socialist comrades on the question of the social position of women, I should be obliged if you would allow me to heartily endorse most of your comments on the inanities of Mr. Herbert Burrows. It is with regret that I have noted the bigoted superstition maintained by the average member of the organisation to which I belong—the S.D.F.—on this point; and with pleasure that I note the persistence shown by women suffragists in fighting for a right that has too long been denied them. In the end their determination will tell, and justify the war they have waged. As to the S.D.F. argument in favour of universal Adult Suffrage, that, to my mind, is a logical and inevitable necessity of our social state, and one for which I prefer to work in preference to working for the half measure. But I do think it is ridiculous to regard the passing of a measure extending the franchise, even on the property basis, to women as a retrograde measure. Indeed, I am not so sure that it is

not necessary, in order to shock male superstition, . . .

Unfortunately I have lost the conclusion of this letter, which, of course, carried my signature. Perhaps, somewhere, there is some reader of this work, who will be able to supply the full letter.

PART VI. "ISLINGTON GAZETTE" ACTIVITY

1. FIRST CONTACT

The Golden Art of Truth-telling.
—VISCOUNT MORLEY, 1887

A double evolution led to close association with the *Islington Gazette*. This was most important to my development. At the time of my direct contact with its columns it was nearly fifty years old. In my view, looking back on its history, it was a true local paper and one of the most important papers issued in London. The amount of educational work it did was tremendous. I consider its contribution to thought and the creation of democratic association and understanding of much greater value than that of many sectarian Socialist and Freethought papers, inspired by the narrow party line outlook. True, the editor did not claim to be an Atheist. He was not, most likely. In any case, he might not have remained editor if he had insisted that such was his outlook. Even today, an editor may hold strange views in the matter of religion or theology. All that is allowable. Only he must not confess to Atheism. The editor attacked Atheism and Agnosticism in his editorial columns. He did better than assert that he was an Atheist. He threw his columns open to all views, to reports of all local activities, and he gave exactly the same space and rights to Atheism as to Christianity. His attitude was: let the best man win and may the truth conquer.

Towards Socialism, whether avowedly revolutionist or admittedly reformist, he adopted the same policy.

The result of the editor's sound and easy approach was to give the people of Clerkenwell, Islington, and North London, a lively journal, an interest in discussion, and an equal opportunity of exchanging and combatting opinions. He knew exactly how to conduct a local paper, and appreciated its value and place in the community. He felt, and felt rightly, that a local paper was an important vehicle of opinion and that it was secondary to no national paper. This is a correct opinion. Only when a local paper is conducted without dignity does it cease from having worth. With the monopoly press, it is almost impossible to find a paper that respects the interests of a town or city, much less those of a district or small village. To such a fallacious and dangerous development of the power of the press magnate the *Islington Gazette* was a challenge.

Recently, I have seen copies of this paper as now published. It is no longer a daily. Free discussion still seems to define its policy, although the space of a paper published twice a week acts as a brake on its readers' freedom of expression.

The first issue of the *Gazette* appeared on September 20, 1856. It is one hundred years old therefore. So far as I can see, it always believed in the principles of the free press in the fullest sense of the term.

My interest in the *Islington Gazette* came about quite naturally. Like many local papers in the early years of the century the *Gazette* subscribed to the services of the National Press Agency. As I have explained this agency supplied stereoed features—that is, certain fixed columns already edited, set, and stereoed and ready for printing—to various local papers at a small price per column. This was cheap and easy production for the local paper and as the same column did not go to the same district or town, all over-lapping was avoided, and it was as good as an exclusive feature. On the National Press Agency, a long time before I left its staff to go to the *Daily Chronicle*, I wrote up, or prepared with the aid of scissors and paste and a little subediting, these columns. They included "Facts and Fancies", "Science Notes", "Hints for the Home", "About Men and Women", "From All Quarters", "Bits From Books", "Words of Wisdom". All these columns were written or composed by me and all of them were sup-

plied to the *Islington Gazette*. If one looks at the *Gazette* during the years 1902 to 1906, they will find these stereotyped columns in its pages. In addition to this, the National Press Agency supplied a stereotyped serial. As soon as one was ended another began. I recall "The Winning of Winifred" by Louis Tray. A horrible attempt at employing alliteration's artful aid.

Owing to the National Press Agency business association with the *Islington Gazette*, I saw a great deal of the paper, since copies came into the N.P.A. office.

I also lived in Clerkenwell and was active there and in North London preaching my way from Christian orthodoxy to extreme Socialism. This also brought me into contact with the paper even when I did not see it in the N.P.A. office and after I had left that job for my work on the *Daily Chronicle*.

The local interest aroused by my Freethought meetings caused much correspondence in the columns of the *Gazette*. My opponents began writing letters to the editor, demanding that I be prosecuted for blasphemy. They need not have been so anxious to get me to prison. I got there in due course. The aspirations of their Christian charity were realised. They achieved their ambition. I duly reached the prison cell, not in one but in nine prisons in all. Their prayers had been answered.

Naturally, I replied to these letters. The result was a large correspondence and reports of my lectures. The *Islington Gazette* made known my activity. It encouraged interest in what I said and did. My indebtedness to it for its fair play is very great. By courting discussion, it contributed to my education. And it drove home a great social truth—*the importance of district and regional organisation to the development and well-being of society*. However widespread and world-wide social organisation has to be, the success of society rests everywhere on local administration. The world depends on each and every locality.

I can recall constantly popping along to the *Gazette* offices in Gough Square, where they are still, with my letters to editor. Although publicly quite fearless, I was always a little shy privately and I took these letters into the office with some nervousness. Even now, fifty years after, I can sense still the timidity that possessed me. Anyway, I did the deed. On that fact, much that I have attempted or achieved since, turned. Perhaps, personally, it has been only failure. Reckoned in the terms of struggle, and not of recognition, I deem it success.

2. *HISTORY OF THE GAZETTE*

Let the voice of the people be heard!—
Dying words of ALBERT PARSONS, executed
Chicago, November 11, 1887.

The history of the *Islington Daily Gazette* is the history of Islington for the past hundred years. During that period the aspect of the borough has changed completely. Verdant meadows and lanes rich in foliage have been displaced by streets of houses, a number of which have degenerated into slums. It is hard to look back and think of Islington as Charles Lamb knew it, when he referred to Upper Street as the country.

There has developed the question of overpopulation. Once people escaped from the city to Clerkenwell, a country village, and then to Islington, even more certainly country. For a long time now people have been escaping from Islington to further built up areas, which in due course of time, will become slums, unless the social system is revolutionised. Islington is the most populous division of the Metropolis.

A century is only one unit of time in the centuries which are bridged by authentic history. To a district like Islington the century during which the *Gazette* was founded and extended meant much. At no period in our history have science and invention made greater strides than during the time that the *Gazette* has been fulfilling its mission in Islington. In that time the art of printing, so far as it concerns a newspaper, has been revolutionised, and the telegraph, telephone, electricity, stereotyping, and the rotary machine have made it possible to produce in a few hours that which would have occupied

as many days one hundred years ago. Then we have the radio and television.

The *Gazette* is not the oldest local newspaper in London. That distinction falls to the *West London Observer*, which was founded in 1855. When I went to live in Shepherds Bush that paper reported my activity in Hammersmith. The *Gazette* for over half-a-century could claim to be the oldest halfpenny local paper in the metropolis. Further, it was the only daily local newspaper in the metropolis, and had a circulation which was not approached by any of its rivals. It embraced an area from Holborn in the south to Woodgreen in the north, and from St. Pancras in the west to Hackney in the east. Within this area it was a fearless chronicler and critic of local affairs It never descended to "sensational journalism", and it always tried to uphold the best traditions of the press. Whatever its editorial convictions may have been, it always preserved a certain political independence, and its columns were at the disposal of rival thinkers. Through its columns, men possessing all shades of religious and political belief, from the intolerant religionist to the Socialist firebrand Atheist, emphasised their views. Successive editors not infrequently permitted the publication in its columns of personal and rancorous attacks upon themselves. Desiring to foster the spirit of fair play, the *Gazette* opened its columns to all comers. In so doing it has not suffered anything from the point of view of dignity.

Nearly 142 years ago—Boxing Day, 1814—William Trounce first saw the light of day in a little Cornish village, near Truro. At an age that would probably shock educationists of the present day, he entered a Cornish printing office and was initiated into the mysteries of Caxton's art. The narrow limits of a Western printing office offered no scope for his energies, and while yet in his teens, he journeyed to London with the proverbial halfcrown in his pocket. In the Metropolis he experienced those trials and reverses which have been the lot of many a man destined to make his mark in the arena of commerce. After working some time as a compositor in London, he went to Paris, and for the best part of twelve months was employed on *Gallignani's Messenger*. On his return to London, he became printer of the *Express*. While thus employed, he established in the Metropolis a small printing office. Then came the time when he had to choose between relinquishing his work on the *Express* or abandoning his press. He decided to leave the *Express* and to develop his printing business. He piloted on his own account some ventures in light literature. This was about the year 1850, when he occupied premises in Cursitor Street, Chancery Lane. In 1852, he established the *Islington Directory*, and about the same time he was entrusted with the printing of the *Society of Arts Journal*.

The passing of the Local Government Act, 1855, vitalised interest in parochial affairs, and Trounce saw in the large and growing division of Islington an opening for a halfpenny newspaper. He resolved to make the experiment. It was an immediate success. Some little time later, he started the *St. Pancras Chronicle*, which did not meet with much encouragement. This journal he abandoned, and threw the whole of his energy into the development of the *Islington Gazette*. The first number of the *Gazette* was published on the 20th September, 1856. In that issue there appeared the following notice:

With a view to making our GAZETTE *known as widely as possible, we have determined to distribute gratuitously several thousand copies of number one. Next week also the* GAZETTE *will be taken round to every house, when, it is hoped, that unless orders have been previously given to the news vendors, copies will be purchased of our news boys.*

The following is culled from the opening address in the first issue:

*Only one halfpenny! How is it possible to get together the news of the week to present an account of all the doings and sayings for the same period of a slice of London with a population three times that of the city of York—to furnish the Islingtonians and their neighbours with sufficient intelligence for a halfpenny? Impossible! These and similarly expressed doubts we think we can hear as each incredulous purchaser fumbles in his pocket for the copper wherewith to dismiss the pertinacious little fellow who has pursued him at the "Angel" with his shrill cry "*ISLINGTON GAZETTE*, sir? Only a halfpenny!"*

The editor promised in his opening address to furnish his readers with a summary of home and foreign news from the most trustworthy sources. Gradually, as Islington grew in importance, the foreign news idea was dropped. The editor decided to devote the

Islington Gazette,

AND PENTONVILLE, HOLLOWAY, HORNSEY, STOKE NEWINGTON, AND FINSBURY ADVERTISER.

A Journal of Local and General Intelligence.

No. 1.] SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1856. [ONE HALFPENNY

The National Savings Bank

South Islington Commercial and

The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon will

J. C. Eve, Family Tea Dealer and

Academy, 89, Chadwell-street,

St. John's Catholic Church, Dua-

Cheap Bookbinding.—Establishment

Establishment for Young Ladies,

Catholic Chapel, 19, Cornwall-place,

Marriages.—A gentleman, aged

Middleton Hall.—Class for French

Important to Tradesmen.—An

Lavenders beautifully scented

Pianoforte.—Mr. George Cottle, of

W. H. Everill and Co.'s Photogra-

Law.—A Solicitor requires a Gen-

Dancing.—A Juvenile Class is now

W. Wright, the Original Muffin

To be Sold for Ever, in an Im-

Thomas Allison, Stationer, Printer,

Sparkling Champagne, in high per-

Crystal Palace, Sydenham.—The

The Home and School Hymn Book.

Mr. John Cade, Architect and Sur-

Household Words! The elegant

The Sunday Teachers' Treasury,

T. Cartledge, the only Manufacturer

Household Words! The Lovely

Herbert and Co., Dyers, Scourers,

Household Words! The select

J. Granger, Jeweller, Silversmith,

Household Words! The much

James Clayton, Working Goldsmith

Household Words! The largest

H. J. Mackinney, Watch and

Household Words! The only

Household Words! Nice Banquet

THE ILLUMINATED CLOCK.

Ladies' Journal for September, 1856.

R. Marriott, Watchmaker, 37,

A Plain Man's Examination of

Crystal Palace.—Notice to Visitors.

SECOND EDITION.

ROYAL BRITISH BANK.

MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS AND DEPOSITORS.

Bennett's Presentation Watches,

Cheap Jewellery, Horse Clothing, &c.—

Important Notice.—If you want

Snell's Portrait Rooms.—R. S.

Harmoniums, superior to all others,

City of London Photographic Es-

City of London Savings Bank.—

London Equitable Mutual Life

St. James's Photographic Gal-

FACSIMILE OF THE "ISLINGTON GAZETTE," SEPTEMBER, 1856.

At that period the paper contained 16 columns, the size of each of the four pages being 12in. by 17in.

whole of the news columns of the *Gazette* to strictly local topics.

The first *Gazette* was a modest venture, and a novelty in metropolitan journalism. On the 21st March, in the year 1857, six months after the appearance of the first copy, it was enlarged to meet an increasing pressure upon its news and advertisement columns. It was again enlarged on April 3rd, 1858. The rapid growth of the population of the district necessitated the appearance of the paper twice a week, a change which was effected on the 30th May, 1865. On January 1st, 1877, the founder handed over the active management of the paper to his son, William Samuel Trounce, who decided to publish the *Gazette* three times a week. His enterprise was justified, and on September 26th, 1881—three and a half years after the death of the founder—the paper commenced publication five days a week. The *Gazette* appeared five days a week for over a quarter of a century until World War I interfered with paper supplies and restricted publishing activity.

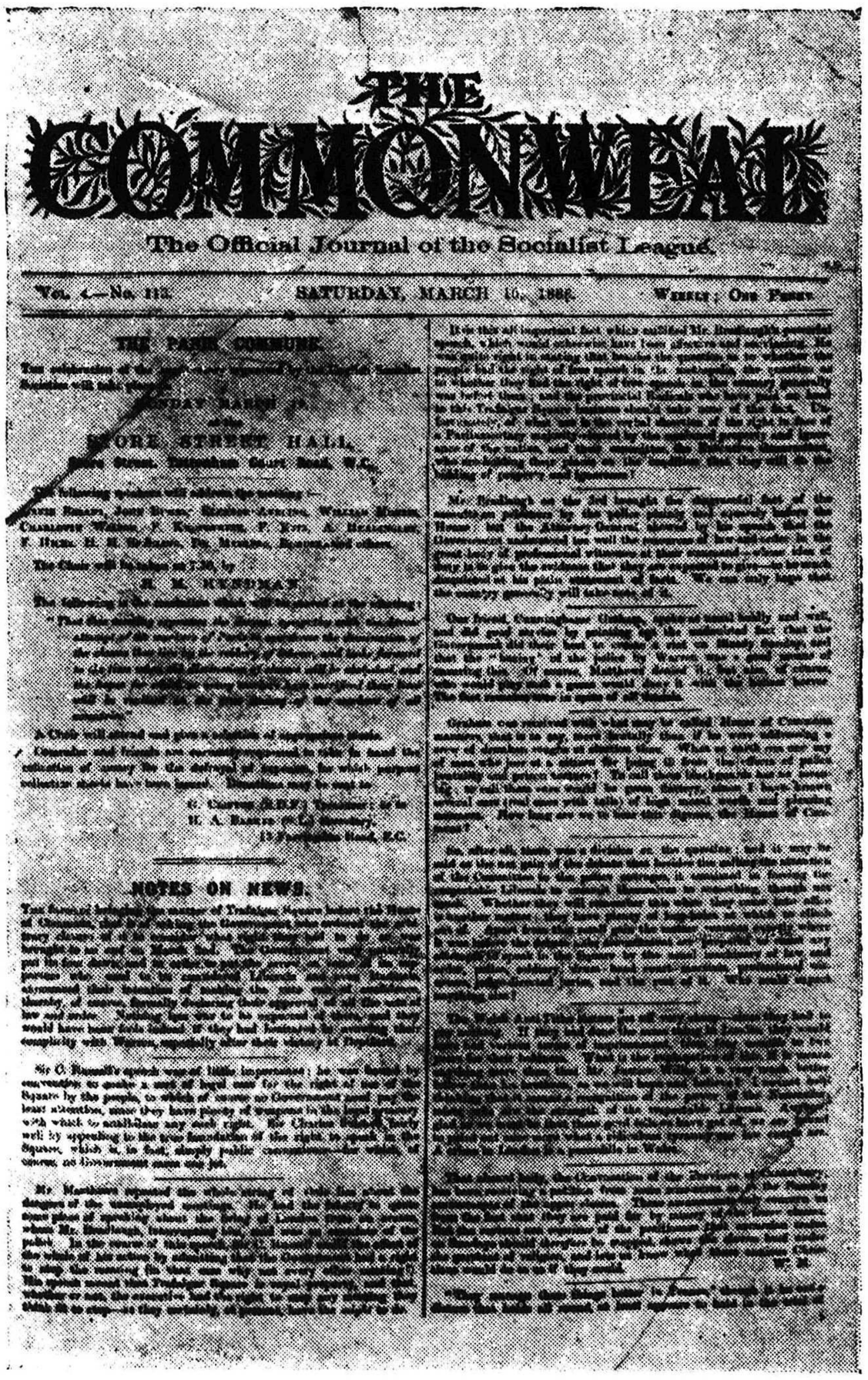
At the time this step was taken the *Gazette* was a paper of 28 columns. No greater proof of the justification of its proprietor's enterprise could be given than the fact that on October 27th, 1890, Trounce again resolved to enlarge his journal to 32 columns.

The growing demand for fresh and up-to-date news induced the proprietor in the early part of 1901 to enlarge his paper to 48 columns, and to publish it at the same hour as the other morning newspapers. As it stated in its issue of April 15th, 1901, from the 20th September, 1856, when the *Gazette* made its bow to the Islington public, a small sheet of four pages with sixteen columns and advertisements, it . . . *"was the herald of the halfpenny journalism, which has now become a power in the land"*.

Its first editor was Mr. Minasi, who, at the ripe age of 90 years, contributed an article to the jubilee issue. A subsequent editor was Sir Edward Russell. Dr. Garvey edited the *Gazette* for a brief period subsequently. When he relinquished the task the editorial duties devolved upon W. S. Trounce, who later entrusted the policy of the paper to Charles Townley, a post this distinguished author and humorist held for many years.

The sudden death of William Trounce, jun., in November 1904, was followed within three days by the demise of his father. Charles Townley only survived his life-long friend and colleague seven months.

Personally, I regard the *Islington Gazette* with a great deal of affection. It gave me considerable scope for stating my opinions and combatting those of my critics. It certainly contributed to my education. If my struggles have helped to make the world a better place in which to live, or have assisted to bring about the crisis which will end all crises in the evil sense of war and exploitation, much of this achievement has been made possible by my association with the *Islington Daily Gazette*.



THE COMMONWEAL

The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

Vol. 4.—No. 113. SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 1888. Weekly: One Penny

THE PARIS COMMUNE.

MOORE STREET HALL.

NOTES ON NEWS.

Facsimile, "COMMONWEAL", March 18, 1888
Front page notes by William Morris

CONTENTS

PART VI. "ISLINGTON GAZETTE" ACTIVITY
—Continued

3. As to Jesus
page 169

4. Atheism States Its Case
page 172

5. "Designer" and Design
page 174

6. Exit Christian Evidence
page 176

7. Alleged Freethought Blasphemy
page 179

8. The Gospel of Freethought
page 185

9. The Garnault Place Orations
page 189

ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapel Market, 1906
page 180

Upper Street, Islington, 1906
page 180

"Garden Seat" Horse-bus
page 181

Highbury Corner, 1906
page 181

PART VI. "ISLINGTON GAZETTE" ACTIVITY—*Contd.*

3. AS TO JESUS

Jesus Christ is the only God—and so are you, and so am I.

—BLAKE

The discussion which commenced in the *Islington Gazette i*n May 1906, with a demand for my prosecution for blasphemy, went on continuously throughout the year. My Garnault Place lectures became a Freethought Revivalist Campaign, without any effort on my part. Curiously enough, *The Freethinker,* with its narrow priestly power complex, gave no heed to this activity. Had Freethought really been its aim, this self-styled national organ of Freethought would have aided my efforts. Not a word did it say.

A challenging letter, expressing a faith in Anti-Christian Theism, was one result of my Garnault Place lectures and the threats to suppress me. In places, I have edited out repetition, as the reader can see, but I have not interfered with the text otherwise.

Date at head of each letter is of the issue of the *Islington Gazete* in which letter appeared.

The date at the foot of each letter is the author's own date of writing.

Thursday, October 11, 1906

CHRISTIANITY v. FREETHOUGHT

Sir—I am glad to read in your columns that Mr. Guy Aldred and the orthodox Christians are coming to close quarters in the long dark evenings now upon us. I hope some real progress of thought will be initiated so that we may get down to the root of the problem. It seems to my view as a Deist or Theist that both Christians and Freethinkers are wrong; the one believes too much and the other too little. Freethought is all right providing it does not degenerate into Atheism and Agnosticism, and Christianity is all right providing it does not detract from the unity and oneness of God; when it goes beyond that it degenerates into superstition and idolatry.

Mr. Aldred, I see, proposes to hold some meetings during the winter evenings for lectures and discussions upon these important subjects. I wish him success, and shall study your journal to see how he gets on. Why not grapple with the real problem? Was there ever such a Person, or did the Jesus of the Four Gospels ever live? I have advertised and repeatedly openly offered anyone from the Pope down to persons like Mr. Aldred the sum of £250 for any first-hand, genuine, bona-fide proof of the existence of such a person as the Christians idolize. I undertake to prove beyond all doubt, quibble, or misunderstanding that no such person as Jesus Christ ever lived.

Now here is a chance for Mr. Aldred or the Christian evidence people to win £250. Will they try? Can they do it if they try? Of course not; but here is the problem to be solved and it can be solved easily from the Bible alone, which is the best evidence and source of truth.

We cannot have too much free thought nor free speech—the more the merrier, whether on religion, or politics, or social questions. Freethought—I mean the original brand—stands for truth, reason, light, and progress, and without Freethinkers we should drift back to the dark ages and live in an atmosphere of lying priestcraft.

A Tory paper recently reviewing a cheap edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason,* said this, "If Thomas Paine could return with the same views he held when hunted like a mad dog, he could easily become one of the adored pastors of one of our most select churches." And today we find the clergy saturated with Freethought, it oozes out of them. Providing they can keep their salaries which they obtain under false pretences, they are willing to throw overboard the Creation story, the divinity of Jesus, Jonah, the talking snake, the miracles, in fact, the whole Bible. Why, Freethought triumphs all along the line, but there is a lot of rubbish from the

clerical rout still to clear away. So, good luck to Guy Aldred in his noble work.

I am, etc.,

THOMAS MAY

Salem House, Tottenham, October 5th, 1906

Tuesday, October 16, 1906

MR. MAY'S CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Sir,— . . . Permit me to say that if Mr. May will deposit the £250 in the hands of some trusted and well-known man, e.g., Lord Avebury, and allow his receipt for the sum to remain in your hands, it will give me the greatest possible pleasure to offer such evidence.

The conditions upon which I must insist are:—(1) That the sole subject for discussion be "Is the Jesus Christ of the Gospels an historical character?"—i.e., did He ever live upon this earth? (2) That in the event of a written controversy taking place between he and I, the whole evidence be submitted to some competent judge of evidence, e.g., the Lord Chief Justice, and a jury composed of the highest legal and literary authorities living. (3) That the above judge and jury be the sole judges of the merits of the above case, and their verdict to be absolutely binding on both sides.

Upon these conditions I am quite prepared to offer evidence in writing. In the event, however, of Mr. May desiring a personal, verbal combat, it will give me great pleasure to meet him in public, subject to depositing the money as above.

I am, etc.,

R. DUNN

128, Daubeney Road, Clapton Park, N.E.

October 11th, 1906

Thursday, October 18, 1906

THE £250 OFFER

Sir—Mr. R. Dunn may have the money without his conditions if he can produce the evidence required to settle the crucial point in this matter. Preliminaries can be arranged without introducing the names of Lord Avebury or the Lord Chief Justice, who may not care to be associated with the matter, neither should Mr. Dunn handicap himself with the onerous conditions he mentions. My offer is clear and open and free from complications. (1) Mr. Dunn and a friend can call upon me by arrangement some evening and assure themselves that I am worth, or possess, at least the amount in question. (2) He can there and then take away the offer in writing, so that by getting the document stamped at Somerset House it will become a legal document. (3) He can take the money away with him (the offer, by the way, is open to any person) if he will produce authentic first-hand evidence (vide the Gospels), that a *virgo intacta,* a female called Mary, bore a child—a male called Jesus. This is my trump card, and as I possess all the aces in this game I hope Mr. Dunn will play his card—mine is on the table.

I agree that the Jesus of the Gospels is an historical character, but as there are two kinds of history, sacred and profane, I do not know which Mr. Dunn refers to. I shall be pleased to debate the question anywhere he pleases.

From other experience of the production of so-called Christian evidence on this subject, Mr. Dunn must clearly understand that any evidence he produces of a "bogus" or unauthentic or invented character, I reserve the right to bring an action against him for attempting to obtain money by false pretences.

I am, etc.,

T. MAY

October 16th, 1906

Mr. F. J. Taylor swept Mr. May's offer aside in a long letter, the essential part of which read:

Friday, October 19, 1906

What proof he wants it's difficult to imagine. The only thing we can be sure of is that his £250 will be proof against all other proofs. . . . Under such circumstances I should be safe in offering £250,000 for any first-hand, genuine, bona-fide proof of the existence of such a person as William the Conqueror apart from all historical record of any shape whatever; and then to follow the Salem House philosopher, I should have to stoop to the stupendous folly of "undertaking to prove beyond all doubt, quibble, or misunderstanding" that such a person as William the Conqueror ever lived, and the materials which I would gather to carry out such undertaking should be culled from the History of England. What a flight for a disordered brain! For me to sweep aside the undoubted fact of William the Conqueror's

existence I must reject with guilty stupidity all historical record of the past and say, I want first-hand proof, i.e., I want to be confronted by some one who actually stood in his presence, and even then I should find a difficulty in exercising my faith in such a way as to believe them. And thus with Mr. May's attempt to brush away the existence of Jesus Christ he will have to banish every vestige of history sacred and profane. Josephus must be branded as a Fabricator along with a host of others.

It must be done to save that £250.

I am, etc.,

F. J. TAYLOR

2, College Street, Islington, N.

There was some point in Mr. Taylor's argument. Only it has never been claimed for William the Conqueror that he was born of a virgin and was God pretending to be man for an unearthly reason. Josephus was not a fabricator but the passage in his works relating to Jesus was fabricated, as even Whiston, his translator, showed. It was impossible for Josephus, the Jewish panderer to Rome, to have made the reference to Jesus attributed to him. The Atheist or Theist, who denies the existence of Jesus the Man, and the Christian, who insists that he must be a God, meet at this very point, of tending, by their assertions, to reduce all history and all biography to mythology. Although we may quarrel in our estimate of people's characters, and although men who have lived may have been very different from our concept of them, this does not disprove the actual existence of a person called Robespierre, or Marat, or Marx, etc. The question is easy of approach if we consider the matter rationally, with commonsense, and without credal bias. Jesus the God could never have existed. Jesus the Man could have existed. This is a question of fact. It is a matter for free discussion and enquiry. Actually, the personal existence of anyone, whilst it can be colourful, is not of fundamental importance. Ideas are more important than men.

The fallacy of the kind of proof Mr. May demanded, knowing that he was cornering the Christian in his deification attitude, was established in the same issue of the *Gazette* by the letter of Mr. Leonard Smith.

Mr. Smith wrote:

Sir—What strange thinkers are Freethinkers. Mr. May offers £250 to anyone who proves to him that Jesus Christ lived, and yet in the same issue of your paper Mr. Aldred wishes us to believe in eight or nine Christs.

Does Mr. May offer to give £250 if he fails to "Prove beyond all doubt, quibble, or misunderstanding that no such person as Jesus Christ ever lived?"

When is Mr. May going to undertake this task, and when may we expect him to pay the money if he fails? Who is to be the judge to decide this question? "The greatest question of the time," according to the late Mr. Gladstone, whose testimony was that "Jesus Christ is the central hope of our poor wayward race."

Regarding Mr. Aldred's offer to lecture to Christians on "Total Abstinence", I should like to ask—Why should Christians provide a place for atheists to speak? Why does not Mr. Aldred advocate total abstinence in the halls belonging to his enlightened and self-denying community? Is it because they have no halls wherein to advocate movements for the benefit of humanity?

Mr. Aldred asks the clergy to debate with him. This is not their work, when there are laymen willing to meet those, who offer to support a church to the extent of 5s. if allowed to debate with the vicar. Mr. Aldred wishes to spring to fame cheaply.

I am, etc.,

LEONARD SMITH

It is obvious that the Christ referred to by Gladstone was a vague, ghostly, impossible idea. Gladstone's words have no meaning. Certainly they cannot relate to a human person who once lived.

I have not space in this chapter to comment on the false view asserted by my 1906 critics that the birth of Jesus was miraculous. Apart from its absurdity, the notion has no Biblical authority. The Virgin Birth is not a Christian doctrine and has no place in Christian belief. The New Testament insists that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary. In their opposition to my preaching my opponents were upholding the opinion of Anti-Christ.

I was preaching the Christian ethic and, in my avowed Atheism, defending and proclaiming the actual message of Jesus. A wise Church would have given me a free pulpit. The Churches ought to make atonement for their past by throwing their pulpits open to me now. I am the true disciple and have been

for fifty-four years. The priests and pastors are worldlings and Judases. They have no message because they have no virtue. They are hell personified.

The summary of my statement about different Christs is correct. It is true also to say that Jesus was a common first name and that there was more than one Jesus. This does *not* deny the possible existence of one, particular person named Jesus. Christ was *not* a name but an office.

Why should not Christians offer a platform to one who combats the drink traffic? Did Jesus teach exclusiveness?

Since 1906, Ministers (including even a Priest) have debated with me. I think the clergy were advertised, not myself. In any case, they sought the debates.

4. ATHEISM STATES ITS CASE

Progress is the law of life—man is not man as yet.

—BROWNING

Apart from the letters directly aimed at my extinction as a propaganda force, by police action, there were a number of anonymous letters.

On Tuesday, July 17, 1906, "A Ten Years' Reader" was staggered "*with amazement at the bitterness of Islington's infidelity against Christianity*".

Merrie Villager, an editorial writer of the *Gazette,* who raised the ire of G. B. S. of Islington, wrote a column open letter on the subject of *Freethought and Christianity.*

Actually, *Merrie Villager* censured the editor of the *Gazette* for opening his columns to a discussion on the subject of Freethought.

With great directness, G. B. S. addressed a powerful rebuke to *Merrie Villager* which I can reproduce only in part:

"Like the rest of the credists, you rolled out the words 'Agnostic, Atheist, Christianity, and Civilisation' as if they relieved your mind by tilting at the wicked 'Atheist'. I notice you never condescended to define either word so that we may get some inkling of what your language meant; so permit me to supply your omissions.

"(a) Agnostic. This word was used by Huxley in matters theological, and suited admirably the 'upper ten', who were thus relieved of the odium attached to 'Atheist'. As none knows anything whatever of the various shibboleths used by credists to bolster up their calling and assumptions, such as God, first cause, futurity, spooks, spirits, sprites, ghosts, ghouls, goblins, etc., ergo all of us are Agnostics.

"(b) Atheist. Ah! this is the 'mad dog cry'. But what means it? Simply this, and made up of two syllables or words, viz., 'a' equal to our preposition 'without' and 'theos', God. Atheist, therefore, 'one without a God'. Every child, then, born into the world, every woman and man who ever lived and died, lived and died an Atheist, i.e., 'one without a God'. Please do not forget. I will answer no question which does not deal with the 'God of the Bible'. I take it you know nothing of any other God, any more than you do of the God of the Bible. If you do, please define it; or him, or her. But to accommodate you I will give the other side of the word 'Atheist' ('Antithesis'), in which the credists hope to convey a vile, brutal and immoral meaning. A clergyman of the Church of England in Hyde Park gave the following choice specimens of his gentle creed:— (1) 'Atheism is devilism', (2) Atheists are the scum of the earth, (3) Atheists are worse than murderers. The only method possible to combat such villainous, foul-mouthed ruffianism is to use the *tu quoque* argument.

"Read, therefore, the following and comment:—'Between October 1st, 1891, and October 10th, 1892, i.e., one year, no less than 629 clergymen of the Church of England were convicted of various offences.'—*Pall Mall Gazette.* (One crime cannot be mentioned.)

"What then does this prove? Why, that number for number these professional credists are 12 times more immoral and criminal than any other section (number for number) of any community on the face of the civilised earth. I have hundreds of other convictions,

not simply charges, cut from all sorts of periodicals of this and other professional credists and creeds. . . .

"(c) 'Christianity' . . . is nothing but a plagiarism, a stolen creed. Every one of the aphorisms, ethics, moral sayings, etc., and which are scattered up and down the pages of the Gospels were adaptations or paraphrases filched from the philosophies of the grand old atheistic, paganistic teachers hundreds and thousands of years before ever the Christian era was inaugurated. Every one, without exception. Ah! but, say the professional credists, Christ taught them, and even supposing the 'golden rule', which is admittedly taken from the heathen 'Chinee', the brave and brilliant Athenian, and others before Christ's time, it is no worse for that.

"Say you so? No, you could not improve on it; but as Christ was not the author, you simply make him a literary thief, using the product of another man's brain power and calling it his own. No teacher dare teach that Socrates, Confucius, and others were the authors, did they do so, he or she would be discharged and ruined for life. Christianity as defined above, and stripped of the humanity of the Pagans, stands pre-eminently revealed as the most sanguinaceous creed that ever deluged a world with blood. . . .

"And now for Christian civilisation. Have you ever read what this has done for the Aborigines of other countries? The red men of North America, the brave Maoris of New Zealand, the murder of 12,000 Soudanese mowed down by the gentle Kitchener, and now the Zulus. Have you forgotten how this same Kitchener boiled the Mahdi's head—fancy a skull boiler!—and flung the bones to the four winds that blow? Can you blush? You cry with the credists, 'Where are your hospitals?' Every hospital, hospice, almshouse, dispensary, etc., was built and endowed by the Atheists, i.e., Atheist to your God.

"If you answer this letter, let me ask you to study *Pre-Christian Dispensaries and Hospitals, Westminster Review,* October 1877. You there learn that in the eleventh century (B.C.) Egypt paid for and maintained a college of physicians and regulated the extent and nature of their work. Brutch's *History of Egypt*. At Athens, fifth century B.C., there were physicians, dispensaries, and hospitals so maintained. In India, fourth century B.C., King Asoka established hospitals not only for man, but for animals."

The publication of this article was a credit to the editor of the *Gazette*. It also emphasised the value of my platform activity and of the leaflet I issued in connection with same.

Similar thoughts arise from the publication of the following poem in the *Islington Gazette* for Thursday, August 2, 1906:

IS THERE A GOD?

(Lines prompted by Mr. Guy A. Aldred's recent utterances.)

If God there be who is the first cause absolute,
Then everywhere and everything this God must be;
That is—and, surely it is far beyond dispute—
If He be all, there nothing is that is not He.
How could the "all in all" beyond himself step out,
Or shrink to less than His Great Self Infinity.
If we be made by God, we are beyond all doubt,
But part of Him—there is no we; but only He!
Our work must all be God's, if we, ourselves, be His;
For, if we "live in Him" 'tis He who works, not we,
For work of God's own work, all God's work truly is;
First cause, for last effect, responsible must be!
Our deeds must therefore be all holy, good and just.
If we and they be part of God's Infinity;
But many of our deeds are bad, we therefore must,
As thinking men, conclude that God there cannot be!
If cause must have effect which is in turn a cause,
And each result had cause which was a past effect,
The mighty march ne'er had, nor will have start, nor pause;
No past nor future gulf, First cause not last effect.

—*G. L. MACKENZIE*

The following day the *Gazette* published the following very solemn reply to friend MacKenzie:

IS THERE A CREATOR?

Sir—Mr. Mackenzie's lines omit the potential consideration that man is endowed with conscience, showing him what is right and that which is wrong. Now, I submit that this

unseen, yet sensitive, unerring guide is the work of a Creator to whom all glory for this priceless mentor should be rendered. I have noted sayings and doings atheistic. At the Hall of Science, Old Street, one learned gentleman, Dr. Aveling, used to grow eloquent upon the theory that the universe propagated itself out of the clashing together of molten masses. I well recollect, too, how one Sunday he discovered that "protoplasm" would, when highly developed, evolve not only the world, but human beings also. The audience applauded frantically, and to this day my impression is that they expected to wake up next morning and find new races of men and women introduced into our islands, with a new firmament extended thereover by this marvelous protoplasm. I watched and waited, but, no prodigies arriving, my mind began to understand that masses of senseless matter cannot create the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, designed to give us light and heat, animals such as horses, sheep, oxen, neither the feathered tribes, nor the world of vegetation—all giving comfort and sustenance to man and woman who, in their turn, are incomparably blessed with power to govern nature in its vastness, and the godlike faculties of speech and reason. So I make haste to abjure Atheism, especially that dogmatic, puerile phase of it which cries out stupidly, "God is not and never was".

As regards Mr Aldred's latest effusion, his words suggest that charity is the attribute of Atheists, not of Christians. Everyone, however, with eyes open, knows this contention is altogether inexact. Examine the lists of money-subscribers to charitable objects, regard those who visit the slums, the good ones who provide substantial aid for the poor, and there you will find the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. In the gloom of mid-winter, with its icy blasts, I have seen Christian sisters at the bleak dockside dispensing food to the hungry, and time after time I have wonderingly asked myself the question what is the secret of such grand devotion? In my opinion, the true answer is that it is due to the Gospel of Christianity, mightiest, noblest force for the regeneration of mankind.

I am, etc.,

F. RICHARDS

Barnsbury Square, N.
August 2nd, 1906

5. *"DESIGNER" AND DESIGN*

What makes me think that there can be no God who metes out punishment, is that good people are so often unhappy and rascals prosperous.

—NAPOLEON

Mr. F. J. Taylor was a vigorous apologist for orthodoxy. He reasoned so well that he ought to have been able to reason better. It must be clear to any thinking person that orthodoxy is stalemate. There must be eternal departure if truth is to receive dynamic expression. Not worship, but enquiry, is the way of truth. Mr. Taylor had a combative mind but seemed incapable of using it purposefully.

Apart from replying to Mr. May, and making most of the narrow biographical challenge, Mr Taylor was stirred to battle by some very clearly stated and well-thought-out letters from Mr. Douglas H. G. Innes.

Mr. Innes showed no great desire to defend me as an individual. He defended the principles of Freethought eloquently and ably.

Mr. Innes wrote from Aberdeen Park, Highbury, N. He seems to have been a student of twenty-one years of age. He died during the year and the *Gazette* published a tribute to him. This notice explained his status and ambitions. I would say that he was an avowed Atheist but found my strong proletarian Atheism somewhat embarrassing. It lacked the finesse of the University.

Mr. Innes published letters in the *Gazette* for August 2, 21, and 24, 1906. Some of his argument was intriguing. It is recalled for that reason. What he wrote is linked only indirectly with my activity, but would not have found expression but for what I said and my way of saying it.

Replies were published to Mr. Innes from Mr. F. Richards, of West Lodge, Bansbury, N.; Mr. F. J. Taylor, of 2 College St., Islington, N.;

Mr. Alfred P. Walker, of Liverpool Road, N.; and T. Edwin Trolloner, of Highbury, N. Where these knights of orthodoxy tittered and laughed at Mr. Innes only, I have omitted their letters. Their replies to me I have reprinted with my own letters.

On Tuesday, August 21, Mr. F. J. Taylor, replying to Mr. Innes, denied that Christians entertained the insane idea that God dwelt in eternal lonely idleness prior to the birth of the terrestial ball.

Mr. Taylor addressed himself to this point at great length. I thought and still think that he was wrong. Christians *must* entertain this "insane idea" for there is no other idea that can be entertained on this matter.

Exactly a week later, Mr. Taylor explained to Mr. Innes that *"the eternity idea was not a speculative opinion but an undeniable realism"!*

The eternity idea is certainly *not* a realism. It is *not even* a speculative opinion. It is sheer illusion and has no meaning for man, who is a mortal being. The eternity idea expresses man's fear to die and is an absolute absurdity.

On the same day, Mr. Alfred P. Walker devoted a very long letter to proving that, since Mr. Innes argued that there must be a designer before design, Mr. Innes must believe in God.

Actually, the argument advanced by Mr. Innes was that there was neither design nor designer.

On August 29, 1906, Mr. F. Richards attacked Mr. Innes with great bitterness.

Both because of his early death, and the fact that the correspondence arising from my handbill occasioned his writing, I reproduce the following Innes' letter.

Thursday, August 18, 1906

"CHRISTIANITY v. FREETHOUGHT"

Sir—I have been greatly interested in the discussion now taking place in your columns re the above subject, and I now crave a small portion of your valuable space in which to satisfy the curiosity of Mr. Walker as to what infidels have done.

In the first place, let it be clearly understood that infidels have been in this world but a short time, and, as a rule, an infidel cannot get rich, for the reason that the Christians are so loving and forgiving that they boycott him.

Also there is the fact that if the average infidel, freely stating his opinions, could get through the world safely, he has had very good luck. For hundreds and hundreds of years the crime (?) of Unbelief was punishable by death.

The greatest charity ever established in the United States by a man who wished to do good, and wished that good to last after his death, is the Girard College. Girard was an infidel.

Christianity didn't invent hospitals, and Christianity doesn't support them. Money is subscribed by people of every religion and by people of no religion at all. Christians seem to fancy they have a right to hospitals. They set up a chaplain, see that the nurses are all Christian, and trample on the rights of all who do not utter his shibboleth.

Give infidels time, and we will build colleges in which something will be taught that is of use. We hope to build temples that will be dedicated to reason and common-sense, and where facts and not fiction will be taught.

In regard to Mr. Walker's second question, re "First Cause", I have noticed that Christians assume that this world was created by an Infinite and Intelligent Being. Therefore, before the world was created there could have been nothing but this Infinite and Intelligent Being. Now how could such a Being be intelligent when there was nothing to be intelligent about? How could this Being be all-powerful when there was nothing to be all-powerful over? If you ask a Christian how the universe was made he answers "God made it"; he believes God made it, he doesn't, cannot, know, but he pretends he does.

In conclusion I would say "Leave this question alone", and in the words of Colonel Ingersoll, "origin and destiny seem beyond the human mind".

I am, etc.

J. DOUGLAS M. G. INNES

18th August, 1906

On August 24, Mr. Innes replied to Mr. Taylor. The following essential statement in this letter, was, and is, to my mind, unanswerable:

"If you take the Christian view and believe there is a God, surely you must also believe that before the design there must have been a Designer. And therefore before the Christian God created anything at all, He must have been alone."

On Thursday, September 13, 1906, Mr. F. Richards published a long letter in which he

quoted from a letter that had been sent to him by Mr. George Jacob, of Cloudesley Place, the following passage:

"'The priest continues what the nurse began, and thus the child imposes on the man.' Religion is a disease. You and I do not know what we are here for, but we do know that religion is the confidence trick by which fortune-telling priests extract money from their unfortunate dupes. You charge God with having designed all the ills that ever existed. An Atheist is honest when he says, 'I don't know what the term God means'. The poor theist with his wandering mind pretends to know God."

With magnificent disdain for fact, Mr. Richards referred to the "great intellects which have not been ashamed to stand up for religion". He classed three persons in this category: W. E. Gladstone; John Bright; and Milton. Mr. Richards did not pause to consider that each one of these individuals espoused a different religion. Milton, who was the only real scholar of the three, was an Arian or even Unitarian in religion. Orthodoxy does *not* consider Unitarianism as a branch of Christianity. John Bright was a Quaker and may have been either a Unitarian or a Trinitarian. Except for some like William Penn, Quakers are inclined to a little mystical vagueness on this point. Penn was an avowed Unitarian and a Quaker ought to be a Unitarian. Gladstone was an orthodox Anglican. He showed some courage finally over Charles Bradlaugh's fight against the oath. As a scholar, he was a pedant and purely formal. Knowledge of dead language is not true or vital scholarship. Gladstone was not, in this real sense, a scholar. Put it otherwise. If Gladstone's understanding was scholarship, then Jesus like Socrates was a man without scholarship. It is possible that Jesus, not without reason, despised scholarship. Most scholars are pedants without backbone. They grovel or crawl where they ought to stand erect and walk uprightly.

Editorial writers, like "They Say" and "Merrie Villager" took a part in the discussion without actually mentioning me. They succeeded in raising Atheistic ire. The orthodox seemed complacent about their editorial comments.

On Friday, November 3, 1906, Mr. Charles C. Spencer of 22 Clissold Road, complained of the editorial "They Say" insult to Bradlaugh's name. Mr. Spencer felt that the editorial intention was to belittle Bradlaugh and to deny the fact that Bradlaugh *"was a great and clever man"*.

Editing a local paper is not all fun: but if the function is discharged faithfully, the editor and his colleagues merit grateful appreciation. In my view, in this Freethought discussion, the *Islington Gazette* proved itself to be a great paper. It was impartial and the educational influence of the discussion must have reached far and wide throughout a larger part of London, and so reached places beyond London. This tradition it preserves today and it seems to have begun with its first issue of a century ago.

6. EXIT CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE

Maximise morals; minimise religion.
—JEREMY BENTHAM

My activity in Clerkenwell, even when I was a Theist, worried Christian orthodoxy. When my Theism developed into Atheism, and the threat to prosecute me for blasphemy gave me regularly large meetings, and reports and correspondence appeared in the *Islington Gazette*, the Christian Evidence Society considered it a duty to enter into the fray. At a later date I came into conflict with the Christian Evidence Society in Hyde Park. Despite its peculiar method of credal and partisan reasoning, I really think it lost the battle in Clerkenwell, Islington, and Hyde Park. Of that the reader must judge.

On Clerkenwell Green, when the Christian Evidence Society first began to besiege me in 1904, its star speaker was a man named Johnson. This man opposed me every Sunday morning, in season and out. He attacked me at my own meetings. He denounced me from the Christian Evidence platform. His attacks were not without viciousness. When I issued a pamphlet entitled *The Safety of Unbelief*, knowing that I was much influenced at that time by the

Rev. Robert Taylor, Johnson accused me of plagiarism. Somewhere I have a copy of that pamphlet but have mislaid it. When I discover it, I shall revise and republish it.

Mr. Johnson, not knowing that such would be the case, inaugurated a policy that has been followed, unconsciously, by various critics and opponents at each stage of my development. He wrote to Charles Voysey, the veteran Theisetic minister, and asked him to denounce me. Voysey discussed the matter with me and our friendship continued without interruption. Indeed, to Mr. Johnson's chagrin, the friendship between Charles Voysey and myself was strengthened. Mr. Voysey was what few if any Christian defenders are, a very great man, possessed of a very rich and beautiful character.

Johnson was much older than myself, although a comparatively young man. He may have joined yesterday's seven thousand years by now. He passed out of my life and gave up combatting my ideas because of a grave folly into which he fell. I hope that his error taught him charity of mind.

Johnson saw Atheism responsible for all manner of sexual offences and crimes against morality. My experience has taught me that, in the main, persons with radical views on the sex question are ethically far superior to their orthodox opponents. We ridicule and despise certain ceremonies and legal shibboleths. Yet our lives, in the main, are more wholesome, and more honestly lived, than those of the respectable. This is easy to understand. because we live from principle, and not from regulation. Of course, there are counterfeit bohemians as there are counterfeit heretics. When the currency is genuine, the man or woman of principle is far superior to the man or woman of respectable orthodox behaviour and approach. In any case Johnson pursued Atheism with might and main, and attributed to Atheists all manner of sex crimes. Then one day came the show-down. Johnson, who ran a religious bookshop in addition to speaking for Christian Evidence, was arrested in his shop which was situated either in Rosoman Street or Northampton Row. I forget which now. He had outraged, on their way home from school, young girl children, of six or seven years of age. The actual arrest was for assaulting criminally a publican's daughter.

The Christian Evidence Society employed a lawyer to plead guilty and to ask for mitigation. Testimony was forthcoming to show that to the time of his arrest, Johnson's character had been good. Of course, this is stupid argument. By character, in such cases, is meant reputation, not character. And a person is always of good repute until he or she is found out. To corrupt a child is a very bad offence. Johnson himself, in attacking Atheists, surrounded the offence with an atmosphere of horror, which revealed the hypocrisy of the man. In any case, he was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, and after serving his sentence, disappeared from the neighbourhood. I never heard of him again. The Christian Evidence Society laboriously explained that his fall from grace did not proceed from his theology. Of course, had an Atheist been guilty of such an offence, it would have proceeded from his unbelief! An absurd argument.

The case was reported at length in the local press and the behaviour of friend Johnson became the scandal of Clerkenwell. The Christian Evidence Society felt that it was wise to leave me in peace for a while. The time factor played its part. Then came new ground. My activity opened up Highbury Corner and so reached into Islington. Faded memories and another district offered God's defenders an opportunity of renewing their attacks.

The Christian Evidence Society thought that it was safe to enter into combat once more. On October 4, 1906, Mr H. Newbold announced that Mr F. Lee of the Christian Evidence Society was speaking in St Peter's Church, Islington, on *"Blatchford and the Bible"*. This was at the direct invitation of the Vicar, the Rev. C. L. Thorton-Dewsbury, who had felt the need to combat the local spread of Freethought.

Mr. Newbold did not mention me by name but he ended his letter with a eulogy of Mr. Lee, to whom he referred as *"a man who does not change his opinions year by year, but who knows what he is speaking about."*

Only viciousness of mind could have inspired this innuendo which time has falsified in no uncertain terms. My extreme views of 1906 have remained intact for fifty years. During the whole of that time I have faced much victimisation for maintaining and upholding them. I am the only public speaker and writer in Britain who can make that boast knowing it to be factually true. Whether Mr. Newbold is still alive I cannot say. If he is, he will know that he was writing nonsense and falsehood. Any change in my opinions has been merely a matter of developed application, a concentration and emphasis, with

increased body or substance, and not a withdrawal. There never has been any suggestion of compromise or weakening.

If Mr. Lee was the typical Christian Evidence lecturer, it is safe to say that he did *not* know what he was speaking about. I have never met a Christian Evidence lecturer who knew his subject. They had one stock in trade —slander of Atheists. What they said was no recommendation of the deity.

The Christian Evidence Society must have felt that it was about to destroy the infidel. In later chapters the reader will find reports of my lectures attended by Mr Henry Burrows, a Christian Evidence Society lecturer. He attacked me at Garnault Place, Clerkenwell; at Highbury Corner, Islington; and in the columns of the *Islington Gazette*. His attacks would have been vigorous and worthy if they had been less venomous. Despite all this, it was Mr Burrows who was converted to Atheism and not the Atheists to Christianity.

In a very friendly letter written from Victoria, B.C., in August 1951, Mr Burrows described his conversion:

CLERKENWELL DAYS

Dear Guy—No doubt this letter will be somewhat of a surprise, but I happened to come across a copy of 'The Word' and so discovered that you are still 'to the left'. Have often thought of the old days on Clerkenwell Green and although I would not care to repeat all my experiences, there were some very pleasant times.

You may recall that I was one of the officials of the Christian Evidence Society and to qualify, I earned a first class certificate in an all England exam. Seeking to be better qualified to combat the infidel, I started a more advanced study for another exam, but did not take it. I found that the more I studied, the less truth I found in the orthodox position. During this period, I very nearly became one of Kensit's Wycliffe preachers and might have gone to Spain as a missionary. However, I also turned left and joined the S. D. F. and spoke quite frequently in Shoreditch and elsewhere. I think I still have a card of a list of lectures in Walthamstow which includes among the lecturers on Socialism: H. M. Hyndman, Val McEntee and myself and Harry Quelch. (I see that McEntee has been made a Lord.)

Coming out here, I associated with the Socialist Party of Canada, and in Saskatchewan, I helped in the birth pains of the C.C.F. The latter was born in the west and in Regina a few got together and formed the C.C.F. Research Bureau, and published a monthly 'Bulletin'. As I was working for the Provincial Government, I had to be a silent partner, but wrote some articles under the pen name of B. A. H. Have also been a member of the Rationalist Press Association for something over 40 years and still retain my membership.

For some years past, my hearing has been going and is now so bad that I have difficulty to hear even with a hearing aid. I am therefore unable to enjoy music (of which I am very fond) and have difficulty in listening to lectures. Being still unmarried, I live somewhat of a lonely life, but manage to get some pleasure out of it. I managed to buy this little place in 1948—it is just two rooms, with an up-to-date 3-piece bathroom and with an oil burner in the range I am as snug as a bug in a rug. Of course, I am now quite domesticated and do all my own cooking and have a very fair sized garden which is much admired during the flowering season.

Now you have a partial picture of me in my retirement and I shall be only too glad to hear from you at any time you feel the urge to add to your lengthy list of correspondents.

Yours fraternally,

HY. A. BURROWS

Victoria, B. C., 26-8-51

P. S.—If you remember George Lanning—he lived in Toronto for some years and was doing well—boy and girl thru college, and he lived among the 'nobs'. I am afraid that the little touch of prosperity caused 'arrested development'. He is now probably somewhat of what might be called a Progressive Conservative. This is rather ambiguous and a somewhat contradictory term, but I think it fits.

This is a very human letter. It shows the value of the campaign I conducted in Islington and Clerkenwell and it emphasises the defeat, morally and intellectually, of the Christian Evidence Society: Islington infidelity reached out to Canada.

It is a pardonable digression. At the same time as I was conducting Freethought propaganda so intensely in Clerkenwell and Islington, I was speaking also in South London, especially in Brockwell Park.

The effect of the Brockwell Park lecturing is revealed in the following letters.

BROCKWELL PARK DAYS

Dear Mr. Aldred—This is just a letter of curiosity. I had a copy of "The Word" given

to me a day or so ago and while enjoying its contents very much could not help wondering whether Guy A. Aldred was the young fellow I heard several times lecturing in Brockwell Park. South London, over forty years ago.

On one of the occasions I heard G. A. A., a debate took place between you—a mere stripling—and a very much older man.

However you are doing good work now and I shall get more copies of "The Word". I like your handling of international questions. It is good for the movement that such brains as yours are behind it.

Sincerely yours,
R. S. ILOTT
Lakemba, N. S. W., Australia, 21-9-51

My Dear Mr. Aldred—Thanks very much for your air-mail letter of 29th August. It was by mere chance that I came by a copy of "The Word". However I am glad you are "G. A. A." of all those years ago. How the years since our Brockwell Park days have slipped away! Some—many of course—of the subjects then debated are still unresolved but I think that, in your capable hands, much light has been shed.

I do not recall your talks very well, you seemed so very abstract and far away. You were so young too. I marvelled at you. I was just then—in the intellectual sense—feeling my feet. About all I knew was that tradition had much to answer for.

My reading has been fitful and desultory, crowded out only too often by a busy life in a clothing factory. I could have made money, but seemed to have the wrong outlook. . . .

Yours cheerily with a long, backward look,
R. S. ILOTT
Lakemba, N. S. W., 15-9-51

As my conflicts in Brockwell Park were with the Christian Evidence Society also, it seems clear that that organisation was a disastrous enterprise so far as the defence of the Christian Religion was concerned. The Deity certainly gained nothing in stature from its apologies.

7. *ALLEGED FREETHOUGHT BLASPHEMY*

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witness? Behold now you have heard his blasphemy.

—MATT. *26, 65*

The really remarkable *Islington Gazette* discussion on Christianity and Freethought arose from a desire to prosecute me for blasphemy. My alleged offence consisted in publishing the Clerkenwell Freethought Gospel Mission leaflet reproduced on page 82. This leaflet was cited in the letter demanding that I be prosecuted. As part of that letter it is reprinted again.

As in previous chapters, the date of the issue of the *Islington Gazette* in which it was published appears above each letter.

Thursday, May 24, 1906

FREETHOUGHT BLASPHEMY

Sir—Cannot something be done to suppress the blasphemous tone of certain meetings held under "Freethought" auspices. On Monday evening last I was present at a meeting held at Garnault Place, and was surprised to find myself the recipient of a remarkable handbill. I append an exact fac-simile of the first part, as it may interest your readers.

CLERKENWELL FREETHOUGHT GOSPEL MISSION

Leader—Rev. Guy A. Aldred, Minister of the Gospel of Freethought

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT THAT

The title of "Reverend" was a purely honorary one, conferred on Christian Preachers by themselves no earlier than the 17th century.

The decision of the Privy Council on Jan. 21st, 1876, to the effect that the title of "Reverend" was a purely laudatory one, the use of which was not restricted to the ministers of the Anglican Church, conferred that title on all atheist propagandists who cared to claim it?

The religion of the Nazarene was a religion for slaves, conceived in ignorance and nursed in priestcraft?

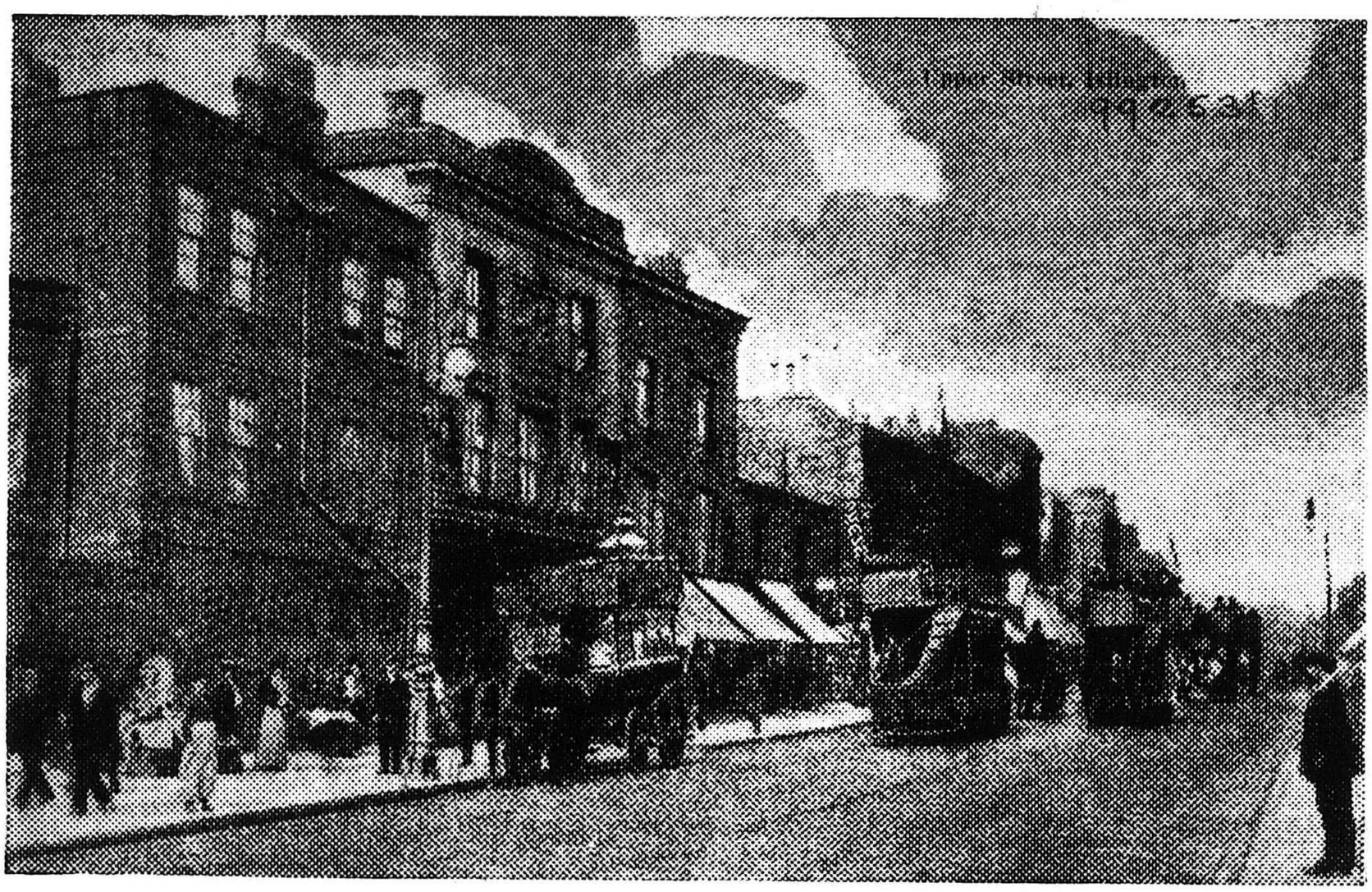


CHAPEL MARKET, 1906

Chapel Market, though greatly changed, is still one of the best known shopping centres in London. It has been a popular shopping centre for Islingtonians for over 80 years.

At the close of the 18th century, Charles Lamb and his sister Mary were living in Chapel Street, near the Angel Tavern.

I frequented this market a lot in 1906 and often visioned Charles Lamb. This induced me to read his essays.



UPPER STREET, ISLINGTON, 1906

This is the street I travelled along on my way to meetings at Highbury Corner. I passed along it day after day, thinking of many social and philosophic problems. On other occasions, especially Sundays, I would be often a member of a group engaged in keen discussion as we tramped along, in a kind of earnest, sober happiness. I would take the horse-bus to the meeting and return by way of Shank's pony.

ACKNOWL

I am indebted to Mr J. Wilki
Gazette" for his great courtesy
have used in this instalment. C
picture of the "garden seat" bus
port Executive. The Chapel M
Finsbury Public Library.



"GARDEN SEAT" HORSE BUS

In 1856, the London General Omnibus Company started with 600 horse-buses. The L.G.O. (the "General") gave London its first big road transport system, and went on serving Londoners for 77 years until it was merged into London Transport in 1933.

The picture shows the "garden seat" type horse-bus (1881-1914), which carried 26 passengers and derived its name from the seats set across the roof instead of along it. It was introduced by the London Road Car Company, and was adopted by the "General". In 1911, the L. G. O. C. handed over its remaining horse-buses to Thomas Tilling Ltd. This firm operated "garden seat" buses until 1914.

I often travelled by this type of bus to my Islington meetings and even to some in Stoke Newington.

GEMENT

, the editor of the "Islington lending me the blocks that I contemporary reproduced the courtesy of the London Trans- picture was loaned by the



HIGHBURY CORNER, 1906

Here I alighted from the bus (type shown in this picture) Sunday morning after Sunday morning, in 1906 and 1907, to do battle with the orthodox in religion and politics.

God does not exist; never did, and never will exist.

Now, sir, can nothing be done to prevent our holy religion being ridiculed in this manner?

I am, etc.,

ANGLICAN

Holborn, W. C., May 23rd, 1906

Friday, May 25, 1906

Sir—In reply to your correspondent, "Anglican", whilst, as a member of the same Church, I agree that it is annoying to think that our streets should be used for the propagation of the blasphemy enunciated by the "Rev." Guy A. Aldred, still I would remind him that to treat him as a serious seeker after truth is simply ridiculous. Some time ago the lecturer in question published a biography of himself, from which we learn that he was born on 5th November, 1886; started a Christian Mission in November, 1902; became a Theist in March, 1903; and an Atheist three months later. Hence it can be seen that he has no mind of his own, and to treat him seriously is the height of folly. Leave him alone, boycott him, and his desire for "notoriety" will die a natural death.

I am, etc.,

ANOTHER ANGLICAN

May 24, 1906

Sir—I sympathise with "Anglican", but I fancy that the Blasphemy Act of William III. c. 35, has been repealed.

The case of Keet v. Smith, before the Privy Council, referred to, was simply this: A Nonconformist minister, named Keet, had died; and his relatives wished to put on his tombstone in the parish churchyard, "Sacred to the memory of the Rev. John Keet". Smith, the rector of the parish, objected that Keet was not in Holy Orders; but the Privy Council held that the title was a merely courtesy one, and might be used by any minister of religion. In these days of extended facilities it may have been extended to a minister of irreligion; but I cannot lay my hand on the authority. Mr. Aldred will, perhaps, supply it.

A Gospel is that which comes by the message of an angel. "I bring you good tidings of great joy," said the Angel. Can Mr. Aldred refer us to the angel who brought him his gospel? Is it good tidings to know that there is no captain on the bridge, no driver in charge of the train?

The religion of the Nazarene was certainly a religion for slaves, since it emancipated all the slaves wherever it had influence, operating so late as 1861 in the United States of America. It was "conceived in ignorance, and nursed in priestcraft", in the sense that it took the natural ignorance of man and supernaturally enlightened it, and created a spiritual power which is not demolished by being called priestcraft.

But what I want to know is, why should Freethought be hampered with such a dogma as this? "God does not exist, never did, and never will exist"? This is only Mahomet's creed, "There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet", inverted. It must be a satisfaction to Mr. Aldred's mind to have proved so tremendous a negative (for I suppose he has proved it) in the teeth of the wise and learned, and pious of all ages; but why impose it on others? Surely any untrammelled Freethinker could form his own opinion on the subject without the intervention of Mr. Aldred as prophet.

I am, etc.

G. M. JAMESON

Monday, May 28, 1906

Sir—As the innocent subject of the extremely interesting correspondence which has been appearing in your journal upon the rightfulness of my claim to "Reverend", the dogmatism of my assertions, and the blasphemous character of my propaganda, may I trespass upon your columns with a reply to my critics. In the first place, let me deal with the temperate and courteous letter of your correspondent, "G. M. Jameson", who states that the title of "reverend" was held by the Privy Council to be a courtesy one such as could be used by any minister of religion. Quite so; but he has not defined what religion means, nor did the Privy Council. And to call my views of life "irreligious" is utter nonsense. Religion is a term that applies to the inspirational part of man's character, the conscious sense of mystery in nature; a recognition of something in nature that defies an ultimate analysis. It leads him to forget his material environment in his desire to probe the mystery of existence; and, in its earlier stages, involved some dim consciousness of man's relation with the unknowable behind the known. As time has progressed, with some, and as it progresses, with others, theological speculation is growing weaker and the spirit of true religion is becoming stronger. Men are realising their oneness with all phenomena, dethroning the God that does not explain

existence, and living not for paradise but for today and for posterity. This is my creed; and seeing that it would cause the reasoner in man to triumph, seeing that it would bind back the sensual passions by reason and sound sentiment instead of a fearful emotionalism, I claim that it is religious. And I am a minister of religion—the religion of the future, of the purer times that I shall not witness.

Coming to Mr. Jameson's definition of "A Gospel", may I point out that the angelic attachment is purely figurative, the only requirement being "Good news" of which it is a message? Now, I claim that, seeing that the doctrine of rewards and punishment and the inculcation of the idea that men's interests are opposed has cursed the world. I am preaching a joyful message when I tell my fellows and my sisters that a man finds his reward for doing good in the performance; that no heaven is needed, since he realises his truest happiness in serving others. But, if there is a heaven, this is the best preparation for it; and if there is a God, this is the most godliness.

"Anglican" may deem this blasphemy, but the Rev. T. Brain Castle, of the Central Wesleyan Mission, opposing me on May 7th, declared these teachings to be sound and grand ethics.

As to my statement re God, I but deny the idea of a personal God, which is a contradiction in terms; and I no more assert a universal negative than the man who says two and two do not make five. Both, were men not biassed, would be placed in the category of axiomatic truths.

The slavery in the States found Christian ministers divided; whilst Lincoln and R. D. Owen, who fought for Abolition, were Freethinkers. As to "Another Anglican", let me say that I never published the biography to which he refers, but that it appeared in the *Agnostic Journal*. I was an anti-Christian Theist for over twelve months. My dogmatism does not prevent others thinking for themselves, since I but state my views, and invite opposition.

I am, etc.,

GUY A. ALDRED,

(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought)

May 25th, 1906

May 28, 1906

Sir—May I, in reply to "Another Anglican", be permitted to express my surprise at the weak-kneedness he displays in defending his faith—the faith once delivered to the saints? Boycotting is the very method the "Rev." Guy A. Aldred wants Christians to employ; for then he can boast of their dread of debating with him, and that they dare not defend their creed. No, he has to be fought and exterminated.

Mr. Jameson is wrong when he says that by an Act of Parliament the blasphemy laws have been repealed. By 33 Geo. III. c. 160 atheists are still liable to fines and imprisonment—and very rightly so. And when it is remembered that in the case of Cowan v. Milbourn, in 1867, the Court upheld Christianity as being part of the laws of England, it is high time some action was taken to suppress this blasphemy; and I, for one, am willing to contribute £10 towards any fund started for the purpose of bringing him on trial.

I am, etc.,

ANGLICAN

Thursday, May 31, 1906

Sir—If Mr. Aldred were reverend in his attitude towards those with whom he differed and their beliefs, I should not object to him using the title reverent, but as it is, his wholesale denunciation and scurrilous assertions are sufficient to justify anyone in objecting to the bad use of the title "Reverend". He claims to have a "Gospel". All I can say is, that if what I heard the other night is a specimen of his "good news", it is enough to wrinkle the face of a cab-horse and disgust any decent person. Perhaps when he reaches the age of discretion he will learn (1) that there are other people in the world besides himself, (2) that the repeated sneers at Christianity do not alter the fact that the religion of Jesus Christ has been and is a great moral elevating force, and (3) that his doctrine is one which even Mr Aldred does not carry out to its fullest extent.

Live for the "present and for posterity" and don't trouble about a paradise of which "you know nothing". This is part of the "religion of the future, of the purer times, which I shall not witness". The Christian is foolish to believe in a future life of which he knows nothing, but Mr Guy Aldred is wise when he believes in a future of which the only sure thing is that he will not witness it. And now about your other correspondents.

To "Anglican", who is anxious to give £10 towards a prosecution, I would say that the money could be better used in work among our less fortunate brothers and sisters, so

don't aid in giving Mr. Aldred a cheap notoriety, and don't waste your money.

To the others I would say, that the mistake usually made is that the fundamentals of religion are never touched upon. They nearly all discuss the right of a man or boy to call himself reverend and to say that his teachings are a gospel. These are trivialities, for whichever side is right the basis of all religion is untouched. Do let us discuss something practical and leave these side issues alone. If this were done I should be pleased to take part in any discussions which the editor cared to publish.

I am, etc.,

A. B. H.

The *Gazette* seems to have published a letter from Mr. A. R. Walker on this date. I have lost the portion of the paper containing this letter.

Friday, June 1, 1906

Sir—Without in any way desiring to add to my indebtedness to you, I should very much like to inquire through your columns of "A. B. H." what the scurrilous assertions were that I made in the course of my lecture the other evening. What was there in my lecture the other night that could "wrinkle the face of a cab horse and disgust any decent person"? I confess, on reading your excellent report of what I said, I failed to find anything likely to give offence to the most bigoted puritan—unless, of course, the sense of such a person was merely horse-sense.

Let us look at it from the standpoint of God existing, being our loving Father, and Jesus Christ being the Divine Saviour. Supposing all these three dogmas to be true, I still maintain that man is elevated and God honoured by thus serving our fellows; and in the event of my dogmas being true, man is still better off for living for himself and posterity than seeking his own salvation beyond the grave. As I have so often claimed, I revolt from orthodox interpretations of Christianity because I am religious. We admire the great man because he is beyond flattery. God, if he exists, is greater than the greatest of men; being also perfect, He is self-contained. He is not affected by the prayers of man whose praises cannot add unto God's glory. And so the noblest way of serving Him is to live for man and thus become more God-like.

But. urges A. B. H., I am in the same quandary as the Christian when I urge living for posterity, since I am as ignorant of posterity's conditions as he is of the nature of the post-mortem paradise. That is not true. Evolution in society and the history of the past serves as an all-sufficient index to the conditions prevailing when I have gone to dust. But science destroys all hope of continued individual existence beyond the grave. There is no index to what would constitute the nature of such an existence supposing belief in it could be vindicated; whilst the personality of the individual is as much physical as it is psychical.

In conclusion, I would remind A. B. H. that the right of calling one's self "reverend" has never, so far as I know, been touched on by any Freethought propagandist other than myself; and even then it is a small matter. I have already outlined the basis of religion in your issue of the 28th inst., and "A. B. H." would do well to deal with that letter.

Reminding Mr. Walker that he does Mr. Jameson an injustice in attributing to him views which I hold in opposition to those of Mr. Jameson, I leave your readers to judge who has written with the least venom and indulged in the fewest personalities in this controversy.

I am, etc.,

GUY A. ALDRED

(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought)

May 31st, 1906

June 6, 1906

Sir—I am obliged to Mr. Guy Aldred for pointing out the falseness of the accusation made against me by Mr. A. R. Walker. The accusation was so grossly reckless and ridiculous that I did not think fit to notice it. It is pleasing to find that my defender is the much-abused Atheist.

Mr. Aldred has given us an exposition of his "creed", which I do not profess to understand and do not intend to discuss. It is only one more added to the dreary train of Shakers, Quakers, Sandemanians, Zionites, Swedenborgians, Huntingdonians, Christadelphians, Peculiar People, Salvationists, Jezreelites, Agapemonites, etc., which belitter and belittle this land. But he has left unanswered my main question, "Why should Freethought be hampered with any dogma or teacher at all?" Once you introduce a teacher, even if a fallible one, you create a school and are as far from Freethought as ever.

I am, etc.,

G. M. JAMESON

June 2nd, 1906

Friday, June 8, 1906

CHRISTIANS AND FREETHOUGHT

Sir—I have followed with great interest the correspondence that has been appearing in your paper upon the "pretences" of Mr. Guy A. Aldred. I write as a Christian who desires to be quite fair to his opponents. I will, therefore, with your permission, describe what took place at a recent meeting at which I was present.

Throughout his lecture Mr. Aldred was interrupted by a man in a semi-intoxicated state, who refused to go away when requested. Mr. Aldred, however, refused to charge him on the ground that his wife and children might be worrying about him, and that, were he sober, he would not do it. This betrays an excellent spirit; and when the youth of Mr. Aldred is considered, the taunts that older men throw at him taken into account, this certainly entitled the "boy" not yet out of his teens to some respect.

I am a member of Mr. Brain Castle's church and attend his open-air meetings, but I must confess that patience and forbearance such as is shown by Mr. Aldred is not extended to interrupters by any of our speakers. I can therefore heartily endorse the following eulogy upon the atheist lecturer by the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale in the *London Evangelist* for January 1905:

We hope and believe that Mr. Aldred voices the opinion of the better-class Freethinkers, and in this class there are some whose ideals and practices are moral, and such Freethinkers ought not to be confounded with the baser sort; that is, with the evil and foul-tongued section of the atheistic propaganda. . . . We venture the opinion that Mr. Aldred is too good to remain an atheist. He ought to be a Christian. . . .

I might add that both my wife and myself know Mr. Aldred intimately. . . . Whatever he says or does always betrays the gentleman and opponent of humbug, whilst he is always contributing to some good cause or other. A life thus consecrated to the service of his fellows embodies a real spiritual worship of our Heavenly Father; and should "Anglican" put his threat into execution, Mr. Aldred may rely on several local Christians who intend to stand by him. If "Anglican" can afford to throw away £10, he can afford to fight in the open.

I am, etc.,
DISGUSTED CHRISTIAN

This really ended the alleged blasphemy stage of the correspondence. Threats of prosecution made way for philosophical discussion.

8. THE GOSPEL OF FREETHOUGHT

Shallow minds are concerned with people.
Average minds are concerned with events.
Great minds are concerned with ideas.
—AN OLD ADAGE

July 13, 1906

Sir—In your issue of today's date, Mr. Guy Aldred is at it again. I don't think Mr. Brain Castle is guilty of doing the things Mr. Aldred accuses him of. It would be a good thing if Mr. Aldred would stick to facts and not fallacies. When he calls John Wesley a heretic he has either not read Wesley's life or he is telling a deliberate falsehood.

John Wesley was one of the best and most upright men that England has ever seen, and I throw out a challenge to Mr Aldred to mention the name of any man who has advocated the Gospel (so-called) of Freethought, Atheism, Monism (or any other "ism") who has done much good in his life, and whose influence for good has lived to such an extent after the man has passed from this world as John Wesley. He cannot honestly mention one name.

When Mr Aldred says that St Paul preached a metaphysical and not a real resurrection, he makes another mistake—St. Paul preached a real, glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Gospel that Christ preached in Palestine over 1,900 years ago still lives, and will live as long as the world lasts, and its power is the only real living power that lifts man to a higher and nobler life than any other power.

Now, Mr. Aldred, how many men advocating

your Gospel of Freethought can you place side by side with Dr Barnardo, General Booth, George Muller of Bristol, Dr. Stephenson of the Children's Home, John Groom of the Flower Girls' Mission, or even John Wesley—not one can he mention? How many can he mention calling themselves Freethinkers, Atheists, Monists, Agnostics by preaching their gospel, and yours, Mr. Aldred, have been the cause of wife-beaters becoming wife-lovers, drunkards becoming sober men, harlots becoming respectable women of society, of thieves becoming honest men—not one can he mention. Now, Mr. Aldred, I ask one favour—stick to facts and to the truth, this alone will bear criticism and face any opposition. The Bible is the only Book which shows a man how to live a noble, upright life.

I am, etc.,
ALFRED P. WALKER

Sir—In view of your past courtesy to myself, I am sure that you will favour me with the insertion in your journal of the present protest against a certain "Freethinker" who performs very often at Highbury Corner on a Sunday morning. In doing so, let me say that I write as one who has never yet compromised his opinions by denouncing orthodoxy in other than the most vigorous terms, as my friends, Councillors Shaw and Killingback, of the F.B.C., will bear witness. Furthermore, I write as a representative Freethought writer, being a member of the staff of the *Agnostic Journal* and a speaker in the movement known in various parts of the country.

In attacking the "antics" of the lecturer in question, Mr. Calman, whose sincerity I do not doubt, I do so without in any way desiring to pander to a respectability I personally rejoice in shocking. But there are two ways of shocking—the one from the lofty attitude of a higher idealism, the other from the vulgarism of a sorry ignorance and miserable "good conceit". So far as I am personally concerned, I believe in vigorously attacking Christianity, but I do so as one who has studied and revolted from its teachings; who is unwilling to misrepresent it, knowing how easy it would be to ridicule Freethought by misrepresentation; who respects womanhood, childhood, and manhood too much to resort to gutter vulgarism when dealing with the Virgin Birth myth; and who, finally, does not overlook the underlying ethical emotionalism that inspires the persistent iconoclasm he is engaged in. But the Freethinker in question whom I have not unoften opposed in Hyde Park as a Freethinker, has no knowledge of history yet attacks Christianity for the blood it has spilled; does not appreciate the philosophical states of mind that are implied by the terms "Atheism" and "Agnosticism", yet prates of the virtues of both; and in addition spends the greater part of his time on the platform in telling ridiculous anecdotes which neither amuse nor edify, and in misquoting Scripture.

To me the names of the heroes who have spent their lives in attacking Christianity are dear, and I am thrilled by their spirit and the sense of my indebtedness to them to overthrow and militantly oppose, a faith that has done so much to pollute the stream of human kindness which might have flown with blessings through the ages. But iconoclasm, however sincere, is not enough. It must be the iconoclasm of men and women who understand theology and have an intelligent and ethical purpose moving them, not the iconoclasm of a clown. Between intelligent opposition, however forcible and uncompromising, and clownish vulgarism there is fixed a great gulf.

Trusting that you will insert this protest,
I am, etc.,
GUY A. ALDRED
(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought)
July 11th, 1906

Monday, July 16, 1906

Sir—Without in any way desiring to trespass upon your valuable space, I nevertheless feel called upon to reply to the singularly pointless—I will not say inane—epistle of your correspondent, friend Walker. In the course of my lecture the other night I claimed John Wesley as an immortal heretic, i.e., as a man who was in advance of his time, lived a strenuous life in the interests of truth, was persecuted, and, finally, by his very fidelity to truth was entitled to

". . . . join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence; live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deed of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues,
So live in heaven."

This, however, Mr. Walker indignantly repudiates as being a slander and charitably suggests that either I have not read Wesley's life or else that I am telling a deliberate falsehood. In other words, Mr. Walker, fresh from a study of Wesley's life, tells us in effect that Wesley was not in advance of his time and was not immortal. Very well, if this is the opinion of a Christian, let it pass.

But I would remind Mr. Walker that he cannot have it both ways; and if slanderous and false for me to say that Wesley possessed a fame that has become immortal, it is alike libellous and false for him to claim in writing that I can point to no atheist "who has done so much good in life, and whose influence for good has lived to such an extent after the man has passed from this world as John Wesley."

Between "a lasting influence for good" and "immortal fame" there is no difference, so that Mr. Walker rebukes me for stating in more elegant English his own opinion of Wesley. Really before Mr. Walker indulges in polemics he should consult a dictionary and likewise study Burns' wish to see ourselves as others see us. And this is the gentleman who advises "to stick to facts and not to fallacies", thereby inverting his own standard of judgment.

On the last occasion that our friend rushed in where wiser men feared to tread, was in your issue for May 31st last, when he rebuked Mr. Jameson for his atheism, despite the fact that Mr. Jameson had been engaged in rebuking me for my atheistic statements, thus crediting to Mr. Jameson views that I held in opposition to him. Evidently Mr. Walker is an authority on abiding by fallacies—a fact that accounts for his remarkable statement that "the Bible is the only Book which shows a man how to live a noble, upright life."

It is more blessed to give advice than to receive it. Nevertheless I would recommend him to read the Koran, the Vedas, the teachings of Confucius, the Sutras of Buddha and finally to read his own Bible; it might alter his opinion.

As to the value of the work of the various individuals he mentions, economically it is socially unsound and harmful, and cannot in any way compare with the work of a man like Sir Henry Thompson, the late gifted surgeon, scholar, artist, and infidel, in popularising the idea of cremation. We mend society to mend the individual. We do not condemn harlots nor manufacture them—Christian civilisation does. We distinguish between social and moral degradation. We begin where the Christian ends.

Your Christian, in many cases, is a drunkard, burglar, and wife-beater. I am none of these things, but a respector of woman, of sobriety, and of myself, and was formerly an earnest Christian. I have now evolved above the Christian theology, and respect womanhood, motherhood, childhood. and myself more than ever.

I am, etc.,

GUY A. ALDRED

(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought)

July 11th, 1906

Thursday, July 19, 1906

Sir—If Mr. Aldred refers back he will find that I tackled Mr. Jameson on his own letter a few days earlier, and the views expressed therein.

I understand the word "heretic" to mean what it says, and not something else. John Wesley was in advance of his time, we must admit; but because of that and also that he was a Christian man, does that make him an immortal heretic? If so, would to God all men were such.

Mr. Aldred says there is no difference between "a lasting influence for good", and "an immortal fame". This is sheer nonsense to talk like that. John Bunyan, by life and labours has left behind him "a lasting influence for good", and all men worthy of the name of men revere his name. Such men as Herod the Great and Nero have left behind them immortal fame but it is of such a character that no one would care to hold them up as examples of good men.

Mr. Aldred says that the Christian in many cases is an ex-drunkard, burglar, and wife-beater. Thank God for that; it shows the power of Christianity to lead them and keep right—can we say that of atheism, freethought, infidelity, and the like? No, not in a single instance, but instead it only helps to manufacture them, and it is left to Christianity to lift them back to a higher level.

For Mr. Aldred to say that Sir Henry Thompson was an infidel is to overstep the mark. If he was not actually a Christian, he upheld the teachings of the Bible. I am recommended to read the Koran, Vedas, Confucius, etc. Well, these are all very well in their way, but whilst their influence for the want of the life power keeps them within the cradle

of their birth, the Bible with its life-giving power extends throughout the world.

I am, etc.,
ALFRED P. WALKER

Mr Walker must have been afraid that he had not made his point. Next day, Friday, July 20, 1906, the *Islington Gazette* published a further letter from him in which he covered the same ground and in parts used exactly the same phrases. I have deleted the repetition of words but left the small amount of matter that was additional. I do not mind ideas being repeated but it is a sheer waste of space to repeat the same words, sentence after sentence.

Sir—Whilst trespassing on your favour, I was rather surprised to read in your columns that Mr. Aldred's age was only 19. When he says he has been a Christian, Theist, and Atheist, I should like to know how a young fellow at his age can have had any experience of a Christian life. It is very little, if any at all. . . . Mr Aldred has a good opinion of himself. . . . Mr Aldred may ridicule the work of such men as General Booth, Dr Barnardo, John Groom, George Muller. Dr Stephenson, and other such men, but he has yet to name the man calling himself an Atheist, Agnostic, Freethinker, etc., who has done as much good as any one of these men.

The Bible, and that alone, is the foundation of truth and true greatness. And I, for one, am not ashamed to call myself a follower of Christ.

I am, etc.,
ALFRED P. WALKER

July 18th, 1906

It never occurred to Mr Walker that Christ, meaning Jesus, might have been ashamed of his alleged follower.

Monday, July 23, 1906

Sir—A well-known clergyman in the States, who has announced his intention to join the Unitarian Church, has complained that orthodox Christians expound truth as though it were fiction and preach fiction as though it were truth. Whether he was anticipating Mr. A. P. Walker's contributions to your columns or no, I cannot say; but certainly the latter's defence of orthodoxy readily lends itself to such a classification.

In the first place, to tell us that he tackled Mr. Jameson upon the views expressed in his letter of May 25th last is utter nonsense, as an examination of the correspondence will show.

In his letter of May 31st, Mr. Walker says: "Mr. Jameson, when he says that 'God is not and never was', must be either wilfully blind or beside himself."

Now, it may be that the mental condition of the individual who would make such a statement is correctly described by Mr. Walker; but it certainly does not describe the mental condition of Mr. Jameson inasmuch as I am the author of the assertion in question, which is quoted from my handbill.

As to what Mr. Jameson did say, if Mr. Walker will act on his own advice and refer back he will find Mr. Jameson thus commenting on my views: "It must be a satisfaction to Mr. Aldred's mind to have proved so tremendous a negative (for I suppose he has proved it) in the teeth of the wise and learned and pious of all ages"; in addition to taking issue with me on every statement that I made derogatory to the religion of the Nazarene.

And in your issue for the 6th of June, referring to my correction of Mr. Walker's assertion, Mr. Jameson says: "I am obliged to Mr. Guy Aldred for pointing out the falseness of the accusation made against me by Mr. A. P. Walker. The accusation was so grossly reckless and ridiculous that I did not think fit to notice it."

With regard to the fictitious nature of his other assertions, I have dealt with them so often, and I find that they are "so grossly reckless and ridiculous" that I am content to leave them to speak for themselves and carry their own self-condemnation to the mind of the thinking reader. I will only add that, unlike Mr. Walker, I am a student of Sir Henry Thompson's life and writings, and being also a correspondent of his during his later years, can testify to his open and avowed infidelity. With regard to friend Walker's condemnation of the Koran, Vedas, Buddhistic Sutras, etc., I will thank him for his criticism, but remind him that these works do not need the patronage of a man who has never made their acquaintance; that Buddhism has more followers than Christianity has disciples, and that this has been brought about without the sword but by force of intellectual convincement.

I am, etc.,
GUY A. ALDRED
(Miniser of the Gospel of Freethought)

July 18th, 1906

Wednesday, July 25, 1906

Sir—I thought Mr. Guy Aldred's ruling passion was the wiping out of dogma, but now he actually says he is the author of that foolishly ubiquitous and omniscient phrase "God is not and never was". Why, that assertion is in itself dogma of a very nasty kind, undiluted, in excelsis. And what presumption it shows on the part of a poor mortal like this endeavouring to set at nought all those ever-present, speaking evidences of design in Nature. I fear, however, Mr. Aldred is so infatuated with his negative nostrum that words of mine would fail to move him. Therefore, let me quote the poet Cowper's superb tribute to the Supreme Being, and may these beautiful words go home to the heart. I should like to turn away from atheism, with its bleak, comfortless horizon, its sullen sky, without one star of hope:

There lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
The beauties of the wilderness are His,
That makes so gay the solitary place,
Where no eye sees them. And the fairer forms
That cultivation glories in are His.
He sets the bright procession on its way,
And marshals all the order of the year;
He marks the bonds which winter may not pass
And blunts his pointed fury; in its case,
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ
Uninjured, with inimitable art;
And, ere one flowery season fades and dies,
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.
The Lord of all, himself through all diffused,
Sustains, and is the Life of all that lives.

I am, etc., F. RICHARDS

West Lodge, Barnsbury Square, N.
July 23rd, 1906

9. THE GARNAULT PLACE ORATIONS

. . . to preach the gospel to the poor; . . . to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those that are buried.

—JESUS OF NAZARETH, LUKE 4, 18

The *Islington Gazette* correspondence arose out of a desire to prosecute me for blasphemy for issuing the leaflet announcing meetings at Garnault Place. As a result my meetings attracted big audiences and the *Gazette* was moved to report them. This it did very fairly and very thoroughly over a period of about a year. Most of these reports I have preserved. There may be some I have missed. If so I shall be grateful to any reader who can supply such missing reports. At different times during my residence in London, my home was raided by the authorities, and papers, letters, and press cuttings were taken and never returned.

Some readers may think that these reports do not matter. I differ here. These reports date my evolution as a heretic. They time the shades of my departure from orthodoxy, political and theological. They recall my actual thinking and expression of such thinking, when I was between 19 and 20 years of age. Anyone can look up the files of the *Islington Gazette* and note that I have reprinted word for word, the reports actually published at the time. This exact time-placing of my views is important. An interest belongs also to the lectures in themselves. On re-reading these reports, I find that the whole discussion is lively and fundamentally vital. The *Islington Gazette* described these addresses as "The Garnault Place Orations". I daresay that they deserve to rank as such.

The threatened blasphemy charge roused interest in these meetings. They, in turn, led to much correspondence in the columns of the *Gazette*. Altogether it was a period of creative activity.

The first report appeared in the *Islington Gazette* for Thursday, May 31, 1906:

THE GOSPEL OF FREETHOUGHT
Mr Aldred and the religion of the Future

Attracted by the correspondence that has been appearing in the columns of the *Islington Daily Gazette,* a very large audience assembled at the corner of Garnault Place, on Monday evening, to listen to a lecture by

the Rev. Guy A. Aldred on "The Ethics of the Atonement and Conventionalism".

The theory that the lecturer urged as being the religion of the future in his letter to this journal of the 28th inst., was developed at length; and the audience was advised that man must first respect himself. In the orthodox view of the atonement there was nothing to lead man to respect himself, but much that demanded that man should first be a coward soul seeking his own salvation at the expense of others' damnation. Like the noble and truly manly Wesley, the lecturer, in his own country and in his own day and generation, was not regarded as great. Others had but to deliver a speech and their "greatness" was assured—according to the reporter at any rate. But what did it mean? Nothing; except that he who was not of the multitude, he who would point to a nobler path of duty well performed and happiness well preserved, did not pander to the prejudices of the crowd; whilst he who was called "great" here and now, was merely the popular man, the interpreter of popular prejudices. Man, ere he could become individually and socially happy, ere he could realise his own happiness here, must awake from this nightmare of prejudice and theological visions. If there was a God, continued the lecturer in the course of his analysis of the hymn, "Sinners turn; why will ye die", he agreed with the noble words of Isaiah that he was whole heavens greater than man in his thoughts and in his ways. Man's duty, therefore, was to substitute work for prayer, posterity for paradise, humanity for theology, and enlightened cosmic selfishness for the narrow conceptions prevailing today of opposed interests. In conclusion, the lecturer paid a tribute to the *Islington Daily Gazette* for its fairness towards him in the bigoted attack made on his Mission.

An interesting discussion followed, Mr H. Burrows, a Christian evidence lecturer, opposing for just over a quarter of an hour. Next week the subject will be "The Ethical Precepts of Buddha".

The *Islington Gazette* published reports of the meetings during June. I think that this report appeared in its columns for June 28, 1906:

SCIENCE AND REVOLUTIONARY IDEALISM

Atheism and Agnosticism

The local influence wielded by the *Islington Gazette* in the adjoining district of Clerkenwell was evident once more in the large audience, numbering about 200 adults, that assembled in Garnault Place on Monday last, on the resumption of Messrs. Aldred and Kellard of Freethought meetings there. Both Christians and Secularists freely discussed the pros and cons of the correspondence in the *Gazette* and commended the editor for his impartiality.

The opening address was delivered by Mr Guy A. Aldred, who defined the relative ideas of Atheism and Agnosticism. Of the two, the latter term was the more comprehensive since it referred to a philosophic attitude taken up with regard to our inevitable lack of knowledge of the "noumenon" underlying phenomena. In such an attitude there was nothing incompatible with the narrower and more specific state of mind known as atheism, which but offered the negative to all ideas of a personal God on the ground that all such ideas involved self-contradictions. So that although Agnosticism was the better name to use as a term that implied a broader outlook, it was absurd to imply that Agnosticism was the better name to use as a term that implied a broader outlook, it was absurd to imply that Atheism was more dogmatic than the name Professor Huxley had coined. The lecturer then dealt with the woman's suffrage question, and having asserted that she owed her social suppression to Theology, declared that she was socially the equal and intellectually and ethically the superior of man, and hence entitled both to vote and to be returned to Parliament. The action of Moralles, the bomb-thrower, received qualified approval from the lecturer, who denounced, on the grounds of its obvious insincerity the conversion of Princess Ena.

Questions having been put and dealt with, a Roman Catholic offered an excellent opposition which met with hearty approval from the audience, both on account of the toleration of the speaker and the tribute he paid to the good work done by other Christian bodies. It was an instructive and temperate speech that certainly did the Christian cause no harm.

The first lecturer having replied, Mr J. Kellard next spoke; and in a brilliantly analytical and keenly-critical speech laid before the audience the case for science and philosophic Agnosticism in a manner much appreciated by the audience. Science, he defined as the application of ideas resulting from

experience. We did not eat many poisonous things today because our forefathers had been poisoned through doing so. For a similar reason we did not tamper with gunpowder. Knowledge was not intuitive, but a development of the potentialities inherent in the infant. Hence it was the environment that was the conditioning factor; the Secularists were working for the betterment of that environment, for the elimination of slum life, and for the substitution of justice for charity. Progress was the fruit of heresy, and that was why Secularists rejoiced in being heretics. With his friend, Mr Aldred, he agreed that sports, e.g., cricket and football, were considered by the Churches to be of more importance than Theology and Religion.

Jack Kellard, I believe, died in great poverty some years later. I lost contact with him owing to my imprisonments. He was a self-educated working man and possessed great loyalty to his class. But for this loyalty he might have made a name for himself under the present system. He was an exceedingly well-known frequenter of the Hyde Park forum.

The following report is culled from the *Islington Gazette* for July 12, 1906. This report reads as follows:

SCRIPTURES OF FREETHOUGHT

The Rev. T. Brain Castle Challenged

Public interest in the Freethought meetings convened every Monday at the corner of Garnault Place by Mr Guy A. Aldred continues to grow, a large and appreciative audience assembling there on the 9th inst. to listen to an address by the lecturer in question on "The Sacred Scriptures of Freethought".

Tracing man's evolution up from the protoplastic cell, Mr Aldred claimed that the germ of a sympathy nobler than all the creeds was to be found in the monkey who consciously risked the danger of the bullet to save its young. When he reflected upon the depraved character of many men and women, he thought that it was the monkey as the ancestor, and not the man as the descendant, that was often insulted by the evolutionary theory. The monkey was not under the bane of any theology, had its sympathy polluted not by the poison of credal prejudice, and never suppressed heretical monkeys by resorting to the rack, the thumb-screw, or the iron virgin. Infidelity, after all, was based upon a trust in the continuity of the laws underlying the movements of the cosmos; recognised that whilst truth was the basis of sound conduct, neither belief nor unbelief were in themselves worthy of merit or demerit; that men believed only as the evidence of their senses led them to believe; and that seeing that that was so, Jesus—i.e., the better Christ of the many to be found depicted in the Gospels—would include the infidels among the religious and the faithful in preference to the Christians.

Infidels believed not in order to save their souls, but only as became men and women; in purity intead of puritanism, in depth of character in place of godliness, in reason instead of sloppy and virtueless sentiment. Turning to the "historical character of Christ", the lecturer claimed that Paul pleaded for a metaphysical instead of a real resurrection.

Several Methodists here interrupted, and it seemed, at one time, as though the platform might be rushed. Order was regained, however, and two opponents, including the Rev. T. Brain Castle, mounted the platform.

In his reply Mr Aldred complained of the unfairness of the Wesleyans, who, he said, had learnt nothing from the persecution of their great founder, the immortal heretic, Wesley. Mr Brain Castle had not listened to his lecture, but had been trying to drown his meeting by a betrayal of music. He had associated himself with organised interruption and lack of fair-play, and "capped all", to use a vulgarism, by replying to an address he had never heard. Such tactics were unworthy of Nonconformists, who ever displayed a greater disregard for liberty than did ever Anglican.

If he was worth while interrupting he was worth while debating with; and he would, therefore, challenge Mr Brain Castle, or any of his disciples, to a fixed debate on any subject they deemed important. If they did not accept, he had no hesitation in declaring both them and their pastor to be intellectual cowards, who brought nothing but discredit on their faith by the very smallness of the trust they reposed in it.

In its issue for Wednesday, August 1, 1906, the *Islington Daily Gazette* published the following further report of my Garnault Place lectures:

THE ECONOMICS OF CHARITY

Mr Guy Aldred's Reply to His Critics

Following upon a lecture he delivered on the previous Monday on the "Atonement", which he treated from the scientfic and moral points of view, Mr Guy A. Aldred, on Monday last, spoke at Garnault Place, on "The Rev. T. Brain Castle and the People's Cause; a Reply to my Critics".

In his opening remarks, Mr Aldred dealt at length with the missionary work of Mr Reuben May, who claimed for 49 years to have been a Mission worker among London poor.

Pointing out that the question at issue was not Mr May's good faith, the lecturer said he did not wish to follow the well-known editor of *Truth* in his economic traversy of the value and cost of Mr May's work, published in that journal a few years since. All he wanted to do was to direct attention to the fact that he had in his hand a pamphlet issued by Mr May, describing the horrors of slum life, and appealing for funds to enable him to take some poor children away in the country for a day. This was a mockery. After 2,000 years of Christianity, children were starved, ill-fed, and born in slums. Pastor May had done nothing to abolish these slums. And children were told, in A.D. 1906, to remember that Christianity sent them away for one day out of 365¼ to the country.

Christian churchwardens, landlords, and jerrybuilders also thrived on the conditions that spelt the depravity and stultification of child-life.

Then there was the work of Mr Groom and Mr Brain Castle.

In reply to Mr Walker's letter, in the *Islington Gazette*, he would deal with both in the main, whilst specifically treating of Mr Brain Castle's work.

With Mr Brain Castle personally, he had no quarrel; but to the "Rev. T. Brain Castle, local Christian Socialist pastor and Wesleyan superintendent", he was violently opposed.

A mere sloppy desire to better conditions was not enough to make a Socialist, who must understand the economic basis of society and be a class-conscious opponent of capitalistic cant and Christian humbug. When the local unemployed wanted organising; when it was a matter of in season and out of season, urging the need of being just to the children, it was the atheistic Mr Guy A. Aldred and his non-Christian Socialist colleagues who did the work, and attracted the organised hypocrisy of the day.

Mr Brain Castle pretended to combine the opposing principles of Socialism and Christianity, yet had never once in that district of Clerkenwell addressed one meeting on behalf of children's, sweated women's, or oppressed workers' rights. Actions spoke louder than words, and facts were more eloquent than mere assertions. And when it was remembered how one of the chief supporters of the Wesleyan Chapel was a certain Progressive Party shining light, one understood Mr Brain Castle's silence. Straightforward Anglican Toryism was, at least, consistent; hypocritical Nonconformist Radicalism was despicable. All that Mr Brain Castle had done was to come into the district, announcing that during his Scottish ministry, he had converted nameless drunkards by the score. But what, by the grace of God, he had done in Scotland, he should be able to do in Clerkenwell. Yet, so far, Mr Aldred had not noticed one closed public house in Clerkenwell, which was somewhat instructive but not exactly remarkable.

In conclusion, he would point the moral of George Bernard Shaw, to beware of the man whose God was in the skies. His audience would be well advised to live, not so as death would find them ready to fly to the arms of Jesus; but instead, find them conscious of the fact that they had done their best to improve mankind's lot on earth.

Mr Ledwith, of the S.D.F., having supported, and questions having been answered, the cheers of a large audience then brought the meeting to a conclusion.

Mr Ledwith was a well-known political character in North London. He fell foul of Frederick Montague over the question of Labour parliamentarism. Fred Montague made a reply that seemed to be all right, only his career and elevation to the House of Lords has shown the apology to be empty and false. Some of Ledwith's remarks were prophetic almost of Montague's future. Ledwith was a rough working man with a clear vision.

CONTENTS

PART VI. "ISLINGTON GAZETTE" ACTIVITY
(Continued)

10. An Edifying Meeting
page 193

11. I.L.P. Aims and Apologies
page 195

12. Local Philosopher
page 197

13. Highbury Corner Forum
page 198

14. Local I.L.P. Climbing
page 200

15. Infidels and "Fidels"
page 202

16. Orations: Freethought and Socialist
page 206

17. Christianity and Politics
page 209

18. Social Democracy Repudiated
page 212

19. Revolutionary Manifesto
page 214

ILLUSTRATIONS

Hansom Cabs
page 196

Islington Empire, 1906
page 210

Caledonia Market
page 210

APPENDIX

Henderson's Bomb Shop
page 215

PART VI. "ISLINGTON GAZETTE" ACTIVITY—*Contd.*

10. AN EDIFYING MEETING

I entered parliament with what I thought to be the lowest possible opinion of the average member; I came out with one still lower.

—JOHN STUART MILL

On Tuesday, May 29, 1906, the *Gazette* reported the I.L.P. meeting in the Grand Theatre, on Sunday, May 27.

The opening sentences of the report make interesting reading for those who look back fifty years:

On Sunday night, a meeting called by the Islington and St. Pancras branches of the Independent Labour Party was held at the Grand Theatre. The attendance, especially in the lower part of the house, was very meagre, and in striking contrast to the meeting held nearly three years ago, when Mr John Burns addressed a house packed from gallery to orchestra stalls.

The chairman was Councillor the Rev. J. Harley, M.A., who said that the motto of the meeting should be: *"Labour for London and London for Socialism."* He also expressed the hope that, as a result of that meeting, *"Socialist members would be returned not only to the Borough Councils, but to Parliament as well."*

This met with great applause. Probably, the actual conquest of parliament was regarded as a kind of forlorn hope by speaker and audience.

Mr Gould moved a resolution that *"only through the I.L.P. could the political and social problems of the future be brought to a satisfactory solution".*

The *Gazette* further reported Mr Gould as follows:

The speaker referred to Mr John Burns as a former great orator for Labour who now sat in the seats of the scornful. His subsequent criticisms proved so distasteful to a large section of the audience that they refused to listen to that portion of the speech which referred to the President of the Local Government Board.

The *Gazette* report continued:

Councillor Sumner, in seconding, said those who had watched the proceedings in Parliament would agree that what good work had been done had been influenced first by the great vote that was recorded for Labour at the last election, and secondly, by the persistent, energetic, and straight course followed by the Labour Party, under the able lead of their friend, Keir Hardie. (Applause.)

Another speaker, and whom the audience heartily cheered, was Mrs MacDonald, the wife of Mr Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., who was kept away by a slight indisposition. . . .

The next speaker was Mr J. O'Grady, M.P. The *Gazette* report of this meeting had much to do with my conversion to anti-parliamentarism. Workers looking back can note well the humbug and the false pretences employed by the parliamentarians to secure power. A more disgraceful abuse of the public platform I have never been able to conceive.

I quote the *Gazette* account, which, of course, was accepted by the I.L.P. as a true and excellent summary:

Mr J. O'Grady, M.P., in supporting the motion, said they had felt for a long time that London had been the dead weight of the progressive movement for independent direct labour representation. The word politician, he went on to say, had become somewhat of a term of reproach in these days. The greatest insult they could level at the Labour man was to call him a politician. He did not know the reason, except that the general view of politics which people had held and which politi-

cians had held, had been in the main a desire to say what was not true and to generally make statements on the public platform that they never intended to carry out. (Hear, hear, and applause.) He thought it was for the Labour Party to rescue a word, that should be a term of honour, from its present position. (Hear, hear.) The present social paradox of extreme wealth on the one hand and sordid poverty on the other did no credit to their intelligence, and it was a state of things which could be swept away, if people were in earnest, in the next twenty years. (Applause.) The problem of the unemployed, he contended, ought to have been dealt with before the Education Bill, because even in these times of prosperity men were being constantly thrown out of employment. Socialists, or men of Socialist convictions, were the only men who could tackle the question in a practical manner. (Applause.) Until recently men and women never had been represented in Parliament. (Applause.) And excluding the 30 Labour members, Parliament as it stood today still represented bricks and mortar, land ana property. (Hear, hear.)

And, notwithstanding the fact that since 1906, the Labour Party has been the Government, and is the official Opposition, Parliament *still* represents bricks and mortar, land and property. All that O'Grady was pleading for was careers for J. H. Thomas, Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, F. Montagu, Attlee, and such like. A monstrous imposture. The I.L.P. built this imposture. The reference of Councillor Sumner to the able lead of Keir Hardie was absolutely false tribute.

Mr G. Wardle, M.P., supported the motion but startled the meeting by defending John Burns and his activity as President of the Local Government Board.

I quote the *Gazette* report of Wardle's speech:

He believed Mr Burns still to be an honest man, in spite of what some people might say. (Cheers and groans.)

"Mr Burns," continued the speaker, "acts according to his lights. He may not always do that which we think he ought to do, and we are going to do our best to help him along. (Applause.)

"The other night Mr Burns made a speech at the luncheon to the honour of 'Reynolds's' Editor. On that occasion, Mr Burns had some very wise things to say about the Labour movement, and he said it required some courage on his part to say them. I don't know whether courage was necessary, but he said them and they were wise things. (Hear, hear.)

"In reply tonight, I wish to say that the Independent Labour Party and the Socialist movement absolutely fulfills every one of the conditions he lays down for a successful Labour movement. (Hear, hear.) We do not put outside our ranks men because they have not been manual labourers. (Hear, hear.) The basis of unity in our movement is ideas. (Hear, hear.) What we seek is the uplifting of the common people, and we are anxious to get the assistance of everybody, no matter in what state of society they may live, or in what circle they may move who will come and give us a helping hand. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

"We don't believe in the policy of isolation. All we say is—and it is a very material thing to say—you must enter in at the straight gate. (Applause.) 'He that climbeth over the wall is a thief and a robber.' (Applause.) And that is the only condition that we shall have as a party which is independent and which is determined to devote itself to the solution of the problems which we have in hand. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

"Some of us are sorry that Mr Burns was not wise enough to see that here was the greatest opportunity of his life to deliver the people of this country from the bondage under which they live." (Loud applause.)

I found this report of Wardle's speech, and the applause, very irritating. I disliked a workers' representative speaking of "*uplifting* the common people". This is impertinent assumption of grace and condescension. There was an anti-workers' tone about this parliamentarism and of course parliamentarism actually is anti-class war. As a prophecy and an indictment of John Burns it was untrue. The Labour M.P.'s who turned pro-war and got themselves into the House of Lords in due course *climbed over the wall.*

The other speakers were not reported. This was as well for my anger was stirred sufficiently at the time by the speeches I have noted. My anger I expressed at meetings in Clerkenwell and Highbury. These speeches were *not* Socialism. They were careerism anticipating!

The speech made by John Burns to which Wardle referred, was delivered at the National Liberal Club on Friday, May 25, 1906, on the occasion of a complimentary banquet to W.

M. Thompson, then editor of *Reynolds' Newspaper*. Reference has been made to Thompson, and his great devotion to the cause of the poor, in this autobiography. He played some part in my political and literary education.

John Burns said:

"My last word is this—and it requires some little moral courage to say it—I view with positive disfavour, with some regret, and, if it does not cease, with some apprehension, the tendency on the part of what is known as the Labour movement to isolate itself from men who are not manual labourers. (Cheers.) I, of course, associate myself with everything that makes for the economic, social, and political independence of Labour, but there are in this room at least a hundred men who have never laid a brick, forged a piece of iron, worked at a lathe, or sawed a plank, and for Labour to deliberately, and narrowly, and foolishly cut itself off from the best, brightest, and choicest spirits of mankind, simply because they have not been hewers of wood and drawers of water, is to cut off the power for their own advancement in the future, and to inflict upon themselves a disability which one day they will find the folly and mistake of doing. I have a right to say this in connection with our guest of this evening, because Mr Thompson is a lawyer.

"There is a foolish prejudice in advanced ranks against lawyers in general, and some lawyers in particular. I never shared it, because I used their services, but it speaks volumes for Mr Thompson that he should have kept on with the brilliance with which he has the work with which he has been associated. Such men as he have helped the cause of the poor, and have fought for the Labour movement, and I hope we shall see in political, social, and Labour movements of the future that diversity of personality, that catholicity of aim, that community of impulse which has brought us here tonight to honour the guest of the evening." (Loud cheers.)

John Burns need not have worried himself. The Labour Party has become a happy hunting ground for lawyers, not all of the calibre of W. M. Thompson. It has carried people from the slums of Glasgow to the College of Justice in Edinburgh. It has given High Court Judges to London, and some of them most reactionary members of the King's Bench, equal to all its past infamous traditions. It is the happy hunting ground for public schoolboys looking for status under capitalism. And, of course, it has carried republican commoners into the House of Lords, where they assumed gladly the peers' ermine and wore fine linen, even if they failed to secure the purple. Burns made a speech of great satisfaction to his audience. It thrilled them but it was mostly nonsense and quite unnecessary. It was a spate of words to cheer folk rejoicing in unworthy positions.

This was part of my political education in Islington. I educated myself by my own activity. I also received education from my immediate environment, from the activity about me. And thus I became the enemy of those who educated me.

11. I.L.P. AIMS AND APOLOGIES

I have remarked over and over again that a democracy cannot govern an empire. Empire is a despotism.

—THUCYDIDES

The *Islington Gazette* report of the Grand Theatre meeting of the I.L.P. (or then Labour Party) and a comparison of it with the meeting addressed by John Burns in 1903, produced interesting I.L.P. protests and revelation of purpose.

T. G. Fowler, Secretary of the Islington I.L.P., writing from 79 Lofting Road, Barnsbury, in the *Gazette* for June 1, 1906, complained and explained:

. . . John Burns' meeting was held in the indoor season, while the Independent Labour Party meeting was held after the closed season; and I noticed you did not state that the rain poured down in torrents on Sunday last,

while the John Burns meeting was held on a fine night. . . .

Then, again, at that time John Burns was the leader of the Liberal-Labour Party; our leader of the Labour Party, Mr Keir Hardie, was not billed to speak. . . .

. . . A. T. G. said that Mr Burns had done some good work in the past, but of course that was before he was made a Cabinet Minister—that was in the days when he denounced both parties as being opponents of the proletariat.

Might not the same be said of Labour Party Cabinet Ministers, who have explained that a responsible Cabinet Minister is in a different position from a Socialist agitator? Fowler was condemning, without knowing it, the I.L.P. and so-called Socialist parliamentarism and not merely John Burns as a Liberal-Labourist.

T. G. Fowler got entangled in a discussion between Sansome, the Tariff Reformer, and F. Montagu, I.L.P., which resulted in considerable local political advertisement for Montagu.

Arising out of the account of the Clarion Van meeting at Highbury, written by Mr Sansome, Mr Sansome expressed a desire to debate further. Montagu explained in the *Gazette* the succeeding events:

1. I obtained permission of my branch to carry out the debate on the following Sunday.

2. I wrote to Mr Sansome offering a choice of five subjects.

3. Mr Fowler, the branch secretary, forwarded an announcement to *Reynolds' Newspaper* at once, to be in time for press, assuming that preliminaries would be satisfactorily arranged.

4. Receiving no reply to my letter, I requested that no announcement should be made from our platform during the week.

Accepting "boldly" Sansome's challenge to debate, Montagu asked the editor of the *Islington Gazette* to grant him the privilege of a moderate article in which to state his case.

The editor replied:

We shall be pleased to give Mr Montagu space to the extent of a column.—Ed. I.D.G.

In the *Gazette* for September 6, 1906, Sansome published a long letter referring to Fowler and Montagu and discussing at great length whether a debate had been arranged. And Montagu explained that the misunderstanding was due to Sansome's conduct. This gave Montagu an opportunity of referring to a passage from his speech which reads as though it were delivered yesterday and not fifty years ago.

Montagu said:

"The realisation of our ideal (Communism)



Hansom cabs which used to stand outside
CANONBURY STATION, 1906

may belong to the dim distant future—that depends upon you—but we have plenty of practical work to do on Socialist lines today. Socialists are the only really practical people in English politics."

At this time, Montagu lived at 5 Canonbury Road.

This discussion did more to make Montagu an outstanding celebrity than if he had had hundreds of local debates. Thus were laid the foundations of his peerage through alleged Socialist activity!

Montagu was regarded as the local champion of Socialism, especially of the I.L.P., and was entering into constant conflict with B. Sansome, of "Black Bess", East Finchley, who was an organiser and lecturer for the Tariff Reform League and the Tory Party. I don't know what good Sansome's propaganda did the Tories--they were wiped out in Islington politically—but the S.D.F. and the I.L.P. certainly got seats in Parliament, became the controlling force in the Borough Council, and the voice of North London on the L.C.C. I would say that Sansome helped considerably to advance the careerism of Montague without benefitting the workers of Islington.

12. LOCAL PHILOSOPHER

Honour to him who, self-complete, if lone
Carves to the grave one pathway all his own,
And heeding nought that men may think or say,
Asks but his soul, if doubtful of the way.

—FIRST LORD LYTTON

During the years 1906 and 1907, the *Islington Gazette* certainly gave great scope to my propaganda. In so doing, it placed Freethought on a par with orthodox religion.

In its issue for Thursday, June 7, 1906, it published the following article, exactly as it is printed here:

ISLINGTON'S ECCLESIASTICAL MEMORIES

By the Rev. Guy A. Aldred

To those who would delve into the ecclesiastical controversies of the past, Islington, from the very richness of its associations, should appeal with a force superior to that of most boroughs. There is, for example, the old parish church of St. Mary, which was built in 1483—that is to say, a rambling structure, dedicated to the Virgin, was first built on the site of the present structure in that year. Could its walls have spoken, what strange stories they might have told those who pulled it down and rebuilt it in 1751; what a store of interesting anecdote might there not have been added to our knowledge of the most interesting of all studies—religion—not only at the time of its rebuilding, but also in the year 1787, when its tower was rebuilt and strengthened.

And then one wanders through Duncan Road, remembering the Irvingite Church erected there in the year that Edward Irving died, 1834. And our thoughts, wandering from the chill 8th December, which witnessed the death of this brilliant scholar and exceptionally capable theologian, light on the district's memories of how this earnest seeker after truth, despite his vagaries, unflinchingly maintained the truth of his gospel in Britannia Fields, till his admirers rented for him West's Picture Gallery in Newman Street, this serving up to the time of his death as the church "reconstituted with the threefold cord of a sevenfold ministry".

What a heritage it is, what a rich legacy of the past, is this record of the borough's association with Irving, this eloquent exponent of the human character of Christ's nature, and propounder of the "Utterances of Unknown Tongues". Still one's mind wanders back until that 15th August, 1792, on which day he was born; and then, leaping the intervening gulf of years of research, of earnest effort, and persistent endeavour, alights on the year 1819, when, as the brilliant assistant of world-famous Dr. Chalmers, he became the centre of fashionable church-going crowds at Glasgow. Four years later saw immense audiences attending the Scotch church, Hatton Garden, drawn there by his magnetic personality. So popular did he become, that 1827 witnessed the erection of a new church for his use in Regent Square. Here he developed hetero-

doxical sentiments, propounded what orthodoxy termed strange doctrines; was expelled from the church on 15th March, 1833; and had caused, by his idiosyncrasy, a great advance to be made in the direction of liberal thought ere he breathed his last in the early December of the following year.

But, you ask, what has all this to do with us who are living in a day of economic oppression; are living in sordid conditions, and have so many ill-treated and ill-fed children? What have these mystic dreams of the forgotten past to do with present misery and future improvement? Let me, with the Editor's courteous and kindly permission, tell you through these columns. In the past, as in the present, men have sought to give a materialist expression to their ideals—and they have left that expression engraven on their altars and written on the structure of their temples. As time has progressed, the letter has become purified, and men have entered more into the spirit of true religion, of that conscious sense of hidden mystery so beautifully symbolised by the term Agnosticism. We note progress, therefore, and hence our dwelling on the past has routed our pessimism of the present, as with Longfellow, we feel, that:

Lives of great men all remind us
That we can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time.

Then, as we once more turn our thoughts towards the consideration of the past, we remember that great men fought for nobler outlooks on life's struggle, for purer conceptions of man's duty, for an abolition of that seeking for "accomplishment" which is the letter of an education entirely opposed to the spirit of true education. And should we now direct our attention to the present, and note the outward conformity of men with the conventionalities to the time to which they are inwardly opposed, we realise that the heritage of the past is to

be up and doing
With a heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

From this we shall go on, until the home is ennobled; woman treated as man's equal socially and his superior ethically; children well-cared for by the State under whose guidance they have been brought into being; the reasoner in man and woman becomes paramount; and the time comes when, with reason at the helm and emotionalism in the stokehold, humans will march through life serving themselves by pleasing, enlightening, and elevating other humans. Man and woman will then have entered into the Social Nirvana, the Freethought Paradise, the blessed state of Socialistic Individualism and Anarchical Communism; and our posterity shall have witnessed "the dawning of the morning of that bright and happy day" when so perfect will be self-government of the individual that monopoly shall not exist, and no enforced laws will be necessary in order that there shall be a democratic control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. O thou ecclesiastical memories of merry Islington, I thank thee that thou should have awakened within me these noble thoughts!

13 HIGHBURY CORNER FORUM

The dialectic is, as a matter of fact, nothing but the science of the universal laws of motion and evolution—in nature, human society and thought.

—FREDERICK ENGELS

In its issue for Tuesday, July 17, 1906, the *Gazette* published a very full account of the propaganda at Highbury Corner on Sunday, July 15.

I excerpt:

HIGHBURY CORNER PROPAGANDA

Secularists, Freethinkers, and — Nondescripts

Sunday was a busy day at Highbury Corner. True to his promise, "A. T. G." was there, ex-

posing in public the trickery of certain politicians of local fame who shall be nameless. Adjoining this meeting was the Secularist platform, on which the first speaker was Mr. Calman, who made many ridiculous jokes, the points of which were certainly not so obvious as their vulgarity. The local minister of Freethought, Mr. Guy Aldred, happening to be present, was invited to mount the platform, and he made it clear that he had no sympathy with Mr. Calman's methods. Mr. Guy Aldred dwelt at length on the fact that so few martyrs died for the Christian Faith during the first three centuries; remarked upon the perfect order in nature that rendered ridiculous the Christian belief in the capricious interference with such law and order, and, finally, vigorously denounced the gutter vulgarism of men who did not study science or philosophy, but relied on foolish anecdote that established nothing except the puerility of the mind of the would-be wit.

By far the most interesting meetings, however, were those of the Social Democratic Federation, with its red flag, and the Christian Evidence Society.

At the Socialist gathering, the speaker was A. Tierce, who lectured on "Packingtown and Social Democracy", the lecture being based on his personal experiences in "The Chicago Jungle". . . .

At the Christian Evidence gathering, Mr. Christopher was the lecturer, his subject being "Science and Prayer". In an excellent address, he distinguished between prayer for better conditions of the weather, and for a better character and lofty soul-like inspiration. He, nevertheless, partially believed in the value of objective prayer physically; and quoted Tyndall, Faraday, and all the great scientists as being believers in prayer and opposed to Atheism.

In reply to a question from Mr. J. Kellard, a Freethought lecturer, who is known as the "inevitable Socrates", Mr. Christopher confessed that it was better to trust to the all-fatherly wisdom than to seek to advise and giude it by the chaotic ignorance of man. He did not, however, wish to ridicule prayer.

Mr. Guy Aldred opposed. In the first place, he said, it was not incumbent on Secularists to accept the philosophic dictates of men whose authority was only admitted in the realm of [the] technical. So that what Tyndall and Huxley and Faraday said on philosophic matters he proposed to bring to the bar of reason and there examine it. Faraday, despite his acquaintance with the Bible, was out of court, inasmuch as he did not bring to bear upon his study of the Bible that amount of critical acumen necessary to a proper appreciation of its place in literature, history and religious evolution.

As to prayer, Mr. Aldred, as an Atheist, did not deny its subjective influence on the mentality of the man who prayed, believing he would be answered; he did deny that it had any objective value, or that its subjective influence would be continued after the individual who prayed realised this fact. At the best, Mr. Christopher had to admit the fallacious reasoning upon which a belief in the efficacy of prayers for weather was based; and in this he negatived the teachings of Jesus. Prayer, therefore, could only be defended on the ground of "policy" and as being something that involved a requesting of the impossible in order to effect the probable. In other words, as theologically understood, it did not rise above hypocrisy at the best.

Mr. Christopher, in his reply, twitted his opponent with imagining that he was superior to Gladstone, Faraday, and Tyndall. Mr. Aldred, it was true, did not resort to gutter ridicule, but he was in bad company. Christ, as his opponent said, taught men to pray, and that was the grandest of all Christ's teaching. His opponent was but 19, and had already changed three times—Christian, Theist, and Atheist in turn. He had a good head on him, and one that the lecturer hoped would be found, at the fourth change, employed in the interests of the noble creed of the Nazarene.

It now being two o'clock an inspector of police drew attention to the fact. The audience slowly dispersed, and thus, amidst the rain, concluded one Sunday morning's propaganda at Highbury Corner.

This was a typical Highbury Corner Sunday morning in 1906.

The reader will learn more about this Christian Evidence Society when I come to deal with Hyde Park and my conflicts there with this strange organisation of orthodox malice and confusion. It was a sadly named organisation. Evidence it never considered, and never produced. Abuse was its only argument. Christianity, if its spirit is supposed to be one of tolerance and compassion, and regard for truth, it never understood. What purpose it served, even as an agent of orthodoxy, is hard to describe.

14. LOCAL I.L.P. CLIMBING

Good people, affairs can only go well in England when there shall be neither serf nor nobles, and when all shall be equal.

—JOHN WYCLIF

The *Islington Gazette* faithfully portrayed in its columns the political activity in North London. Looking over its pages one sees the step-by-step rise of the Labour movement to power, *within the capitalist system;* the circumstances that permitted Frederick Montagu to migrate via the I.L.P. from Highbury Corner and Islington Market to the House of Lords; and the exhaustion of working class enthusiasm by studied and despicable political careerism. The picture is a most interesting one.

On Tuesday, July 24, 1906, the *Gazette* published an account of an S.D.F. meeting at Highbury Corner, that places on permanent record the names of many persons well known as "comrades" in North London fifty years ago.

I excerpt part of the excellent report:

THE HIGHBURY CORNER FORUM

Tariff Reform v. Socialism

A large audience assembled at Highbury Corner on Thursday evening last to hear a debate between Mr J. J. Newlove, secretary of the East Islington Branch, Social Democratic Federation, one of the prospective candidates of that organisation for the Highbury Ward at the forthcoming Borough Council Elections, and a gentleman who had attended the Socialist meeting on the Tuesday previous and subjected the speaker to continued interruption, as a result of which the debate was arranged. The unknown opponent had not arrived at 8.30 p.m. when "comrade" Miseldine opened the proceedings, and as his opponent had not put in an appearance by 9 o'clock "comrade" Newlove was called upon to deliver an address on the subject of the debate.

The speaker commenced by outlining the policy of Mr Chamberlain, as set forth at Glasgow on October 6th, 1906. Dealing with the taxes on food and manufactured articles from foreign countries, the speaker maintained that such taxes would have to be borne by the home consumers and buyers. . . .

Protection did not bring higher wages. The introduction of the McKinley tariff in the States was an example, while in all protected countries except America wages were lower than in England.

"This," said the speaker, "proving the Socialist contention that wages are determined by the level of subsistence," a remark well received by the audience. . . .

"Wherever capitalism dominates," said the speaker, "the effect upon the workers is the same. It is inherent in the system."

The address concluded with an appeal to those present to study Socialism for themselves, and so understand something about the greatest world movement history had known.

Several questions were asked and answered.

On Wednesday, August 15, 1906, the *Gazette* reported at some length the I.L.P. meeting at Highbury Corner the previous Sunday. I excerpt from this report all that is essential to remember:

I.L.P. AT HIGHBURY CORNER

One of the best meetings of the season, under the auspices of the Islington Branch of the Independent Labour Party, the audience numbering a few hundreds, was held last Sunday night at Highbury Corner, under the chairmanship of Mr Craig.

Mr Dalton criticised the remarks made by Mr Freeman, of Hoxton, who was speaking on behalf of the Moderate Party at the corner in the morning, in view of the Borough and County Council Elections. . . .

Mr Dalton pointed out in his further remarks that the Moderates were using Mr Freeman, and of course if returned to power they would not act according to the policy he had laid down.

The *Islington Gazette* certainly played a part in helping to get Montagu into the House of Lords. It made him locally famous. He rounded off his record by becoming a soldier and gravitating to being an officer during the first World War, contrary to all Socialist principles. The Keir Hardie tradition of Anti-

Militarism put aside, he duly reached the House of Commons and then the House of Lords. A pretty study in parliamentarism.

On Wednesday, August 22, 1906, the *Islington Gazette* described the I.L.P. campaign in Islington in a long article from which I quote:

I.L.P. CAMPAIGN

Municipal Candidates

On Sunday evening Mr Montagu, a candidate, spoke to a large audience at Highbury Corner. He said they had 500 branches of the Independent Labour Party and 29 representatives in Parliament. This position had been brought about by open-air work. Opponents did not oppose on principle, they made paltry and contradictory objections. . . .

The Independent Labour Party believed in abolishing capitalists and capitalism. But not in abolishing mills and machinery. . . .

Mr Sansome was invited to oppose. He began by saying that it was amusing to him the way in which the speaker had skimmed over the thin ice of Socialism. . . .

Mr Sansome was listened to with marked attention, and received a hearty round of applause at the close.

It is intended to have further debates on these vital questions.

In its issue for Tuesday, September 11, 1906, the *Gazette* published an account of the Clarion Van meeting at Highbury Corner on the previous Friday. The speaker was Bramley and his address was reported at great length.

The report was headed:

CLARION VAN AT HIGHBURY

Last Meeting at Islington

The opening account gave Montagu his place:

"Clarion" Van No. 2 held the last meeting of its Islington tour at Highbury Corner on Friday evening.

Mr Montagu, as chairman, remarked that not until we owned and controlled our means of livelihood would we be free in the true sense of the term. He then introduced Mr Bramley, the official "Clarion" lecturer.

No one suspected then that presiding over this meeting would help Fred Montagu to become a Lord!

Bramley quoted Lord Avebury to the effect that the position of the working class in Europe was intolerable and that revolution was probable. Bramley then attacked Joseph Chamberlain and protection. He dealt with the question of Old Age Pensions and the proposal of the Royal Commission in 1899 and 1901 to pay 7s. 6d per week, at the age of 65, to all worn-out persons.

Bramley was reported by the *Gazette* as commenting:

"Magnificent! But here are certain conditions. They must not have been convicted after the age of 45 of any offence, and must not have received alms during that period. Too old at 40! What about the odd 25 years; they cannot work, and if they beg or steal (in a small way, of course, not on the Stock Exchange) they forfeit their pension.

"But when the Commissioners considered the cost of this munificent scheme they found that it would cost 10 million pounds per annum, and this was too much. So the scheme was abandoned. And yet they were spending £250 millions on a war to provide cheap labour, and twenty titled idlers of this country are drawing nearly seventeen millions every year as their pensions. But a British workman dearly loves a lord.

"Mr Gully, after receiving £6,000 a year as Speaker, retired 'exhausted' with £4,000 a year. (Cries of "Shame".)

"Mr Edward Clarke, the retired Solicitor-General, receiving a pension of £2,000 a year, told the Plymouth electors that he was opposed to old age pensions because 'they would undermine the sturdy independence of the British working classes'."

15. INFIDELS AND "FIDELS"

Whoever produces anything by weary labour does not need a revelation from Heaven to teach him that he has the right to the thing produced.

—ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

The *Islington Gazette* discussion and reports of my Garnault Place meetings covered a wide field of thought and enquiry. Notwithstanding my youth, it reveals my very clear and definite interest in theology and my radical Atheism. The studious interest and aggressive radicalism have continued down the years. Yet, in the real sense of association and support, the Secularist movement had no time for me. I was permitted to do a great deal of "donkey work", speaking in Station Road, Camberwell and Brockwell and Victoria Parks. I visited Manchester once, and I was invited to speak on the Secularist platform there only because I was on a Socialist visit to the town. G. W. Foote was opposed very strongly to me, as though he feared a rival: and Chapman Cohen could not be accused of friendship He exhibited no desire to welcome me to the Platform. In the Ethical movement, my treatment was much the same; and the Rationalist movement definitely closed its platform to me. In Glasgow, although one or two members of the Secular Society are friendly, the Society as a body is opposed to me appearing on its platform. Yet my record as an Atheist thinker and propagandist is outstanding. I have lasted the distance. It is not for me to defend my platform activity but I do claim that I can hold my own in debate. I know my subject and I am not without dignity. Why these years of boycott? The men who have usurped leadership write and speak with less vigour and clarity than I do and lack real service in the struggle.

For these reasons it is of interest to study this 1906 campaign which ought to have been boosted by the official journal of Freethought.

In the foregoing chapters the *Gazette* correspondence has not been exhausted. I now venture to reproduce two letters attacking my views. They were answered by me at the time. My replies will be reprinted in a later chapter. I am anxious to bring the analysis of this correspondence to a close. To my mind the discussion, with its pro and con, and its items of abuse, is as lively today as when first published. Hence I have no objection to letting the Christians so-called have their say, without immediately reprinting my answers.

The date at the head of these letters is the date of the issue of the *Gazette* in which they appeared.

Friday, August 3, 1906

THE GARNAULT PLACE ORATIONS

Sir—If Mr. Guy Aldred's enthusiasm in the sacred cause of humanity were not so fatally clouded by an unconscious (?) egotism, he might find a better target for his atheistic missiles than the promoters of poor children's holiday funds. Let me say at once that I have no connection with any such fund, and, as a Tory Churchman, I certainly hold no brief for Messrs. Brain Castle and Co. No doubt these gentlemen say and do many foolish things—it is a way people get into—possibly Mr. Guy Aldred is not altogether exempt. But a far greater question than Radical Nonconformity is at stake here. After all these sneers at "sky pilots", let me ask—not for the present Mr. Guy Aldred—but any sane person, who wishes to preserve his mental balance—"Allowing for all the inconsistencies of professing Christians, would London, England, the world at large, be better or worse if the name of Christ were to lose its influence, the Cross of Christ its inspiration?"

The socialism of which Mr. Aldred fondly dreams may be a golden vision or a dismal nightmare, but it will certainly never be realised in his time or mine, and meanwhile the followers of the Divine Nazarene, with all their shortcomings, go quietly on their way, and do, at least, something for this same humanity, even if it be only to send the little ones of our crowded cities for a brief space into purer surroundings (frequently for more than "one day in 365").

Surely this "cup of cold water" to the parched lips of childhood is worth offering, even if proffered in that name, of which Mr Aldred was an old-time worshipper, and which, when the darkness is past, shalt once

again receive his humble and devout allegiance. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my little ones (men or women or children) ye have done it unto Me".

I am, etc.,

R. G. WOOD

112 Guinnes's Buildings, Finsbury, E. C.
August 1st, 1906

CHRISTIANITY v. FREETHOUGHT

Sir—Seeing according to your report that Mr Aldred mentioned my name at his meeting last Monday night, I feel bound to some extent to make a reply. I had intended to be at that meeting to listen to Mr Aldred's nonsense, but was kept at home with a bad foot. I hope I shall have the pleasure one of these evenings of listening to Mr Aldred.

Now, sir, I have been waiting for Mr Aldred to accept my challenge to mention the name of one man calling himself a Freethinker who has by his gospel (so-called) of atheism, or any other "ism", left the world the better for his having lived in it. He may mention if he likes the names of Voltaire, of Ingersoll, or any other, but they won't do.

Why is it that Christianity has not held the sway as it might have done. It is because man's heart is stubborn and hard, and he is too self-willed, he thinks too much of his own self-interest, and will not allow the teachings of Christ to influence him for good, and to help him to extend the hand of a brother to his fellow-creatures, Mr Aldred knows he cannot honestly support his own cause, and so attacks those who are trying by God's help to uplift their downtrodden fellow-creatures, such men as Mr Reuben May, of Whitecross Street, of Mr Groom, and others.

I will ask him another question, and until he has answered let him not find fault with Christian men who have tried to do good and to some extent failed. How many charitable institutions have been started and entirely supported by Agnostics, Atheists, Freethinkers, etc.? Not one. All our charitable institutions for the uplifting of humanity are the result of Christ's teachings, and the selfishness of man is the cause of slums, misery, and disease of every kind, and when a man is down and has no power within himself to raise himself up, what power is there, I ask, in Mr Aldred's so-called "gospel" to do it for him? None whatever.

The power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ can and does when the man is willing to accept that power and apply it to himself.

I am, etc.,

ALFRED P. WALKER

Liverpool Road, August 1st, 1906

Fred Walker loved to repeat himself. In the *Gazette* for Friday, August 17, 1906, he returned to the attack and repeated his questions word for word. I have omitted only the repetitions:

Sir,—I have been on the look out for an answer from friend Aldred to my letter which appeared in your issue of the 3rd inst. Does he feel he is unable to answer it, or did he feel taken back with the letter of Mr Richards or that of Mr Wood. Voltaire, living about 150 or 200 years ago, never made a greater mistake in his life than when he said, "In 100 years hence the Bible will have been destroyed, and Christianity will only be remarkable as a thing of the past." Never was the lie given to such a statement more than at the present moment. The Bible, instead of being destroyed, is being circulated more widely than ever. . . .

Suppose Mr Aldred believes in "Cause and Effect", does he believe in a "first cause", what was it, and how did that "first cause" come about? If he does not believe in a "first cause", then I would ask, how did this world of ours come into existence?

These are simple questions, and surely Mr Aldred, who is so well read, and apparently has such a good education, coupled with an extensive knowledge of things seen and unseen, has some answer to give to these. Surely we need some power greater than our own to lift us to a higher standard of life, and what power I ask. is there outside of Jesus Christ to do this for us?

Trusting our friend Aldred will give us an honest, straightforward answer to these questions or else for ever hold his peace until he is able to look at facts as facts and nothing else, I am, etc.,

ALFRED P. WALKER

Liverpool Road, August 16, 1906

Monday, August 27. 1906

INFIDELS AND "FIDELS"

Sir,—As I have been away in Kent for some little time, partly on holidays and partly on a lecturing tour, I have not been able to keep

in touch with the *Gazette*. I am agreeably surprised to find on my return home, however, that you have been opening your columns during my absence to other infidels as well as to "fidels". As I have not much time at present to deal with my critics at length, may I inform your readers that I will lecture on the correspondence next Saturday, September 1st, at Garnault Place, and also deal with the whole correspondence since May 24th in the columns of the *Agnostic Journal*.

I am, etc.,
GUY A. ALDRED
(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought)

Thursday, August 30, 1906

Sir,—I noticed in the *Islington Daily Gazette* of Monday a letter by Mr Guy Aldred, in which he states that on Saturday next he will lecture at Garnault Place in reply to the several points raised by your correspondents during the past week or two.

I want, however, to call Mr Aldred's attention to a challenge thrown out by himself at Garnault Place more than a month ago. It was on the Monday preceding Bank Holiday, after a ferocious attack upon the Rev T. Brain Castle, that Mr Aldred said: "I will allow any man to occupy this platform for three-quarters of an hour; I shall take a quarter of an hour in reply, and the opener can finish up with a quarter of an hour. The subject will be "What has Christianity done for Humanity'," and he added, "I contend Christianity has never done anything for the benefit of humanity." I was present and said, "Very well, I'll take you on if I am in London."

Mr Editor, at the time I expected that possibly I should be away from London. Mr Aldred accepted my reply to this challenge, and fixed the debate for the following Monday, when somebody in the crowd remarked, "Next Monday will be Bank Holiday." Mr Aldred then said, "Let it be Tuesday or Monday week, or any Monday night you chose." To this I assented with the qualification, "if I am in London". Mr Aldred's reply was, "If you are not here I shall open in the usual way."

On the Tuesday I was at Garnault Place, but Mr Aldred did not put in an appearance; on the Monday following I was at Garnault Place, but Mr Aldred was not there; the Monday following I was again at Garnault Place, and still Mr Aldred was absent. I saw him on Sunday last on Clerkenwell Green, in the midst of his Socialist friends, holding a kind of discussion, and I said to a friend, "There is Aldred; he will surely be at Garnault Place tomorow night." I went last Monday night to Garnault Place, and hung around from 8.40 to 9.40, and Mr Aldred did not put in an appearance. But what was my surprise on opening my *Gazette* to find that Mr Aldred had chosen to reply on Saturday next to letters in your paper, and to find that he ignores the challenge issued by himself (he choosing the subject of debate) and accepted by me.

I am going away on Saturday morning, but even if I were to be present, I should not have any locus standi, because Mr Aldred chooses another subject or subjects and other opponents.

By the way, whilst I am writing, may I ask information on a few assertions made by Mr Aldred at one of his lectures? He says that Lord Kelvin stated that in considering the subject of the Creation we must not appeal to an abnormal act of God. A strange saying for Lord Kelvin, but not out of the region of probability, though I know that Lord Kelvin has on other occasions spoken explicitly to the effect that science does not preclude God, but rather confirms the idea of a Divine governor of the world. But Mr Aldred followed this up by saying that Lord Kelvin did not believe in the Virgin Birth, in the Atonement, in the Resurrection; in fact, Lord Kelvin was not a Christian.

I am not going to deny Mr Aldred's statements re Lord Kelvin, but I should like information, and if the statements are correct, Christian Evidence Society lecturers should no longer boast of Lord Kelvin being a Christian.

I am, etc.,
M. O'CONNELL

Sir,—It it rather amusing to find individuals of Mr Walker's type of mind advising a correspondent who writes with the scrupulous exactness of Mr Innes to stick to facts. As I have already shown in your columns, Mr Walker has, in the course of this correspondence, deliberately attributed to Mr Jameson Atheistic sentiments I expounded in opposition to Mr Jameson. When the error was politely pointed out both by Mr Jameson and myself, he re-asserted, in the teeth of the facts adduced by us and patent to all fair-minded readers of your journal, the "truth" of his fallacy.

Then he took issue with me about Wesley being "an immortal heretic", whilst yet, in substance, agreeing. Such an erratic evan-

gelist evidently belongs to the Torrey group of fiction specialists, and displays the intellectual acumen of a Welsh Revivalist. And it is to the category of the slanders of a Torrey—slanders so ruthlessly exposed by Mr W. T. Stead—that his reference to Ingersoll's filthy language, not fit for dogs to hear, belongs. If Ingersoll's gems of literary and psychic interest were not fit for the dogs to hear, it was only because they were of too great an altitude; for similar reasons Mr Walker cannot appreciate them; he must shed his Christian prejudice first, and lose the tail of ignorance.

For the rest I invite him to my meeting on Saturday. The fallacy of the "personal experience" argument and also the lamentable ignorance of Mr Walker, should prove of interest to your correspondents. He may have 30 minutes on the platform.

I am, etc.,
GUY A. ALDRED
(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought)

Wednesday, September 5, 1906

CHRISTIANITY v. FREETHOUGHT

Sir,—As arranged, I went to Mr Aldred's meeting on Saturday night at Garnault Place, but I must say that I was so disgusted with his remarks that I began to think that I had wasted my time and that I should have been better employed elsewhere. Nearly all his remarks were sheer nonsense; and, as I was going to say, a few were lies. At anyrate, I am quite prepared to meet Mr Aldred next Saturday, in debate, at Garnault Place. What does Mr Aldred say?

I repeat my challenge. Can Mr Aldred mention the name of one man calling himself Freethinker, Infidel, Agnostic, etc.. who has done so much good in his life for the social and moral uplifting of the people as . . . General Booth. The work of General Booth is such that even the City of London present him with the Freedom of the City of London; the King receives him in audience: and if General Booth was to appeal for £50,000 for his social work, I don't hesitate to say he would get it easily. Can Mr Aldred say as much of any of his leaders on behalf of Infidelity or even of himself.

And again I ask, can he mention one charitable institution started and supported by, or, in the name of the Freethought, Atheist, and Agnostic party? . . . They say they mend society to mend the individual, but they start at the wrong end of the stick. We mend the individual first by giving them the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which makes new men and new women of them.

Can Mr Aldred mention any Infidel or Freethinker who has gone into any of our large prisons and preached the gospel of Freethought to the convicts. General Booth can go and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to about 1,000 convicts a few days ago at Dartmoor, and is cheered by the men.

He speaks of men willing to suffer imprisonment for the cause of Infidelity. I wonder how many would be willing, if needs be, to lay down their lives and to be burnt at the stake rather than give up their Infidelity or Atheism? Would Mr Aldred?

I shall be willing to meet Mr Aldred on his own platform next Saturday night to continue the debate on this correspondence from July 13th to date, does he consent?

I am, etc.,
ALFRED P. WALKER

Liverpool Road, September 3, 1906

Wednesday, September 12, 1906

Sir,—As a reader of your excellent journal who was present at the debate on Saturday between Mr Walker and Mr Aldred, and also as a Christian, I must say that I was disgusted with Mr Walker's performance. Mr Walker has stated that nearly all Mr Aldred's remarks were sheer nonsense, and that some were lies. Surely it would have been more to the point to have given some examples.

I am a Christian, but I am also open-minded; and I have read a great deal of Mr Aldred's writings. He is worthy of the best steel in our camp, and until a Christian comes forward who can display courtesy, and betray the same acuteness of mind and sincerity of purpose as Mr Aldred, I am afraid we shall have to go from our best followers of the noble Carpenter of Nazareth to the local "infidel". I have learnt much from Mr Aldred, and am greatly indebted to him. I am somewhat shy of writing letters to the Press, but Mr Walker's inanities—as Mr Aldred calls them—have led me to violate the dictum of SS. Paul and Peter.

I am, etc.,
DISGUSTED CHRISTIAN WOMAN

The contentions of Mr. Wood and Mr. Walker were answered item by item in my letters to the *Gazette*. The editor was scrupulously just. My speeches and letters had to be considered from the double standpoint. Attacking orthodox Christianity and replying to

orthodox Trinitarian Christians I had the right to assume that all that appeared in the Bible was true and that Christ was God and the propounder of miracles. As a Freethinker, in my own person, I did not subscribe to this idea, but claimed the right to analyse, to accept Jesus as a man who actually lived and was a rebel and a heretic. Historically, I did not accept the water-into-wine story, which is pure mythology. My Christian opponents lacked the understanding to follow such reasoning and I had to answer from a cruder angle. Their plane of thought was irrational, unscientific, and somewhat vulgar.

16. ORATIONS: FREETHOUGHT AND SOCIALIST

Matter is a philosophic category which refers to the objective reality given to man in his sensations; a reality that is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, but which exists independently of them. To say such a doctrine can become antiquated is childish prattle.

—LENIN

The *Islington Gazette* reports of my meetings revealed the progress of my materialism. I turned more and more from physical materialism, the tracing of the physical basis of the mind of man, to economic materialism, the realisation of the social-economic basis of his personal morals, sense of justice, and his code of wisdom. The truths of economic materialism distressed me much more than that of physical materialism. I did not like to think that death ended man's personal existence, though I could not see how that truth could be denied. This truth hurt my vanity and wounded my egotism. It was a most uncomfortable reflection. Economic materialism assailed my faith in reason. I believed that there was a principle of ethics and of law. To have this governed and defined by economics was distressing. Yet analysis compelled me to note its truth. I was compelled to accept the Marxian concept. The evolution of my mind along these lines was emphasised by the *Gazette* reports of my Garnault Place and Highbury Corner meetings and discussions.

The *Islington Gazette* for Thursday, September 13, 1906, reported:

THE PROGRESSIVES AND THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Mr Aldred's Vigorous Attack

A large, and, at times somewhat disorderly and excited crowd, listened to an address delivered by Mr Guy A. Aldred at the corner of Garnault Place on Monday evening on "The Old Order and the New". Behind his meeting was assembled another one convened by the local "Trades Council", which was addressed by Councillors Shaw and Gillett, and Mr J. Villa, on the baths question. This meeting supplied Mr Aldred with his subject.

We were, he said, nearing November, and the Progressives were fearful lest they should not be returned. They had been returned on the baths' clause at the last election, and after worsting the Moderates on a false issue, had attended chapel meetings and told the P.S.A.'s—for men only—"How God won the election".

There was behind him Councillor G. M. Gillett, J.P., who was a semi-secularist and hypocritical Christian. By thus characterising the President of the Peel Institute, he did not accuse him of individual dishonesty. All that he meant to imply was that he did not have courage enough to break with the creed that had hitherto stood for the spiritual chloroforming of the people.

The Sermon on the Mount told Mr Gillett to take no heed for the morrow, but both as a banker and a local politician he did so.

Jesus also declared that we should ask for all we wanted in prayer, and if we had faith, it would be granted unto us. Instead of telling election lies at street corners, why did not Mr. Gillett pray to God to make the public more gullible, in order that Christian capitalists might the better prey on them.

As a philosophic state of mind, Atheism implied honesty of thought and expression.

That being so, every honest Atheist would be well advised to stand up for Socialism and Atheism instead of Christian charity. For all the charity ever given Labour paid; for Labour was the source of all wealth. It was the duty of men and women, therefore, to abolish the influence of local bethels, to get rid of "Gawd thanking" Wesleyan aldermen, and to take up the cudgels on behalf of justice for all.

Christianity was dying, and Sir Oliver Lodge said that there was no monopoly of miracles.

For himself and his class-conscious Socialist friends, the lecturer would say, in the words of John Morley, to the Christian religion and its professors:

"You have so debilitated the minds of men and women by your promises and your dreams that many a generation must come and go before Europe can throw off the yoke of your superstition. But we promise you they shall be generations of strenuous battle. We give you all the advantages you may gain from the sincerity and pious worth of the good and simple amongst you. We give you again all that the bad among you may get by resort to the poisoned weapons of your profession and its traditions, its bribe to mental indolence, its hypocritical affectation in the pulpit, its false speciousness to the world, its menace at the deathbed. With all these you may do your worst and still humanity will escape you, still the conscience of the race will rise away from you, still the growth of a brighter ideal, and a nobler purpose will lead them on and on, leaving ever further and further behind them your dwarfed finality and its leaden noiseless stereotype. We shall pass you by on your flank and your fiercest darts will spend themselves on air. We will not attack you as Voltaire did, we will not exterminate you; we shall simply explain you. History will place your dogma in its class either above or below a hundred other competing dogmas, exactly as the naturalist classifies his species. From being a conviction it will sink to the level of a curiosity, from being the guide to millions of lives it will dwindle down to a chapter in a book. As history explains your dogma, so science will dry it up; the conception of eternal law will silently make the conception of the daily miracle of your altars impossible, the mental climate will gradually deprive your symbols of their nourishment, and men will turn their backs on it, not because they confute it, but, because, like witchcraft and astrology, it has ceased to interest them. The great ship of your church, once so stout and fair, and well-laden with good destinies, has become a skeleton ship; it is a phantom hulk with warped plank and sere canvas; and you, who work it, are no more than the ghosts of dead men, and at the hour when you seem to have reached the bay, down your ship will sink like lead or stone to the deepest bottom!"

Question time having now arrived, the lecturer was asked if a Christian could be a Socialist. His reply was, "Utterly impossible."

"How do you account for Keir Hardie then?"

"I do not account for him; he is a politician," was the retort.

Asked why he attacked the Peel Institute and his former companions, Mr Aldred replied that he had no personal quarrel with any of its members; he merely attacked it as part of an organised system of hypocrisy.

The meeting then closed.

The *Islington Gazette*, for Wednesday, September 19, reported:

THE ETHICS OF VITUPERATION

Progressives to be Opposed

A large, attentive, and orderly meeting gathered at Garnault Place on Monday evening to listen to Mr Guy A. Aldred's reply to the letter from Mr Burrows that appeared in the *Islington Daily Gazette* last Monday, Mr Burrows being himself present during part of the time. Having read the letter verbatim, the lecturer proceeded, in a spirited manner, to deal with the points it raised seriatim.

It was first of all suggested that Mr Aldred was not well-known as a "clear and logical reasoner and thinker". Well, who was to be the judge as to what constituted clear reasoning? Perhaps he should say who were to be the judges, since the phrasing of the sentence suggested an appeal to the majority. But if they took the case of Herbert Spencer, there was a time when he was not well-known as a "clear and logical thinker". Today the thinking recognised his prowess. But Spencer, unrecognised, was just as clear a reasoner and thinker as Spencer, recognised.

He was accused of being young. He only need state that we were all guilty of that crime at some time of our lives, and Mr Burrows was not exactly a patriarch. The lecturer would, however, content himself with recalling Pitt's memorable reply to Walpole

in the House, on March 6th, 1741. The substance of that reply was not an attempt either to palliate or to deny the atrocious crime of youth charged with so much decency and spirit on him, but a contenting of himself with an expression of the wish that he might be one of those whose follies would cease with their youth, and not of those who continued in ignorance and criminal folly in spite of age and experience.

Mr Burrows, not being himself open to the accusation of being a thinker, attacked him for his change of convictions. But that was inevitable in the case of one who was true to the ideal of truthseeking as was the lecturer. But if change of opinion was a crime, why did the Progressives now denounce him, whereas they had formerly applauded him.

As to his work, it was true he did not seek to patch up the present rotten state of society, but he served humanity better by striving for justice. He did not question Mr Gillett's personal sincerity, but attacked him as a Progressive, and as such, one of the helpless perpetuators of the present system of venal hypocrisy and immoral competition.

As to the threat of slander, if Mr Burrows thought he was going to be frightened by such means he had made a mistake. For what he said he had no apology to offer. The Progressives were gentlemen, for all gentlemen were respectable; but what respectability signified he would not say, for to do so might involve him in a slander action! But something more drastic than a slander action was promised. What was it? Howling Nonconformist hooliganism? If so, Mr Burrows, who suggested such—he would be careful and say, seem to hint at such—was a worthy successor of Catholic and Protestant persecutors of old.

An apostle of exactness, Mr Burrows referred to a society as "something else", and also to the Roman Church—which might mean either the pre-Christian or the Roman Catholic! If Christians required to keep a bridle on their tongues, the lecturer was sufficiently fearless in his exposition of truth not to require to do so.

The mittens had been taken off and gauntlet thrown down. Very well. In the same way as, in Islington, the Socialists intended beating the Progressives, so also would they in Clerkenwell pursue them to the bitter end. There was to be no compromise with men who attempted the impossible and sought to combine sound municipal enterprise with consideration for the ratepayers' pockets. There was to be no compromise with mansions-in-the-sky supernaturalism, and Christian charity.

The sole basis of reform, the real solution of the social problem, was to be found in class-conscious Socialism and philosophic atheism. It was not enough for a man to be an Atheist, he would also have to be a Socialist. And in Atheistic-Socialism was alone to be found the workers' salvation.

Mr Aldred then asked for questions and opposition; but none being forthcoming, said that he intended taking no further notice of individuals who were afraid to defend themselves on the platform. Mr Burrows had fallen short of being a Dean Swift by being too funny to be humorous, too vindictive to be sarcastic, and too childish to be serious.

The *Islington Gazette*, for Wednesday, September 26, 1906, reported:

SOCIALISM IN FINSBURY

Opening of Election Campaign

On Wednesday evening, at Garnault Place, Finsbury Socialists opened their election campaign, J. Shirras presiding, and Mr Guy Aldred being the speaker.

The chairman, in his opening remarks, stated that neither Moderates nor Progressives represented the workers' interests. He accordingly asked the inhabitants to work for the return of the two Socialist candidates, who were not financed by bankers nor were they private printers nor jerry builders.

Mr Aldred followed.

Should he in the course of his address attack individuals, he desired it to be understood he attacked them as political opponents, not as individuals. As to whether personal sincerity and intellectual acumen were compatible with attempts to reconcile sound municipal enterprise with ratepayers' interests he would leave for his hearers to judge. Frankly as a Socialist, he had no regard for the ratepayers' pocket.

He saw around him, as the result of class control of the necessities of existence, a vast amount of mis-directed labour, pauperising parish relief, misemployed science, sweated child, girl, woman, and man labour; he noted luxury on the one hand, and starvation for lack of food on the other. All this was the outcome of the spirit of grab and greed, of the gospel of being successful at the expense of others, that was fostered and nurtured by

the profit-mongering tendencies of capitalism. The wretched unemployable manufactured by this system would not be raised, nor, as a class, abolished by tinkering Progressives, who, like the Moderates, remembered posterity and the proletariat with triennial regularity. By a coincidence elections were also triennial events. The only solution of the problem was the common ownership of the necessities of life, the common distribution of socially produced wealth. Such a control fostered healthy competition, that was, competition that stimulated the non-successful and inspired the successful; competition that made for a joyous, happy, slumless and prosperous world—a world that possessed neither useless monarchies nor scraggy-necked duchesses. If the administration in Finsbury had been bad, it was their own fault for participating in the return to power of a party that was as willing to betray the workers' interest as the Moderates.

Were his hearers to turn to matters Parliamentary they would observe that the Liberals thought more about second ballot as the result of Labour opposing them than by Labour hanging on to their tail. Not that the lecturer praised the Independent Labour Party, nor that he entirely endorsed its policy.

Coming to the local Labour and Trades Council, he would ask his hearers to question its members as to their reasons for being trade unionists, whether their unions all existed, whether they were private capitalists, and whether they all possessed delegated authority. Seeing that palliatives were given by the governing class to soften the effect of capitalistic slavery, that wealth consisted in the value of labour involved in turning raw material into the manufactured article, they could leave palliatives to governing classes, and need work only for the abolition of the present state of society. Revisionism was unnecessary, revolution and discontent were the remedies.

His desire was to raise the wretched rather than to rise, content with Morris to remember that the cause alone was worthy until the good days brought the best. Meanwhile, and until then, poverty would continue, poisoned food would flourish, and a great part of the population would be employed keeping the other part honest.

There being no questions or opposition, the meeting was closed by the chairman, who passed several animadversions upon Mr Gillett as a Progressive, the local Trades Council, and Progressive employment of non-union labour.

17. CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS

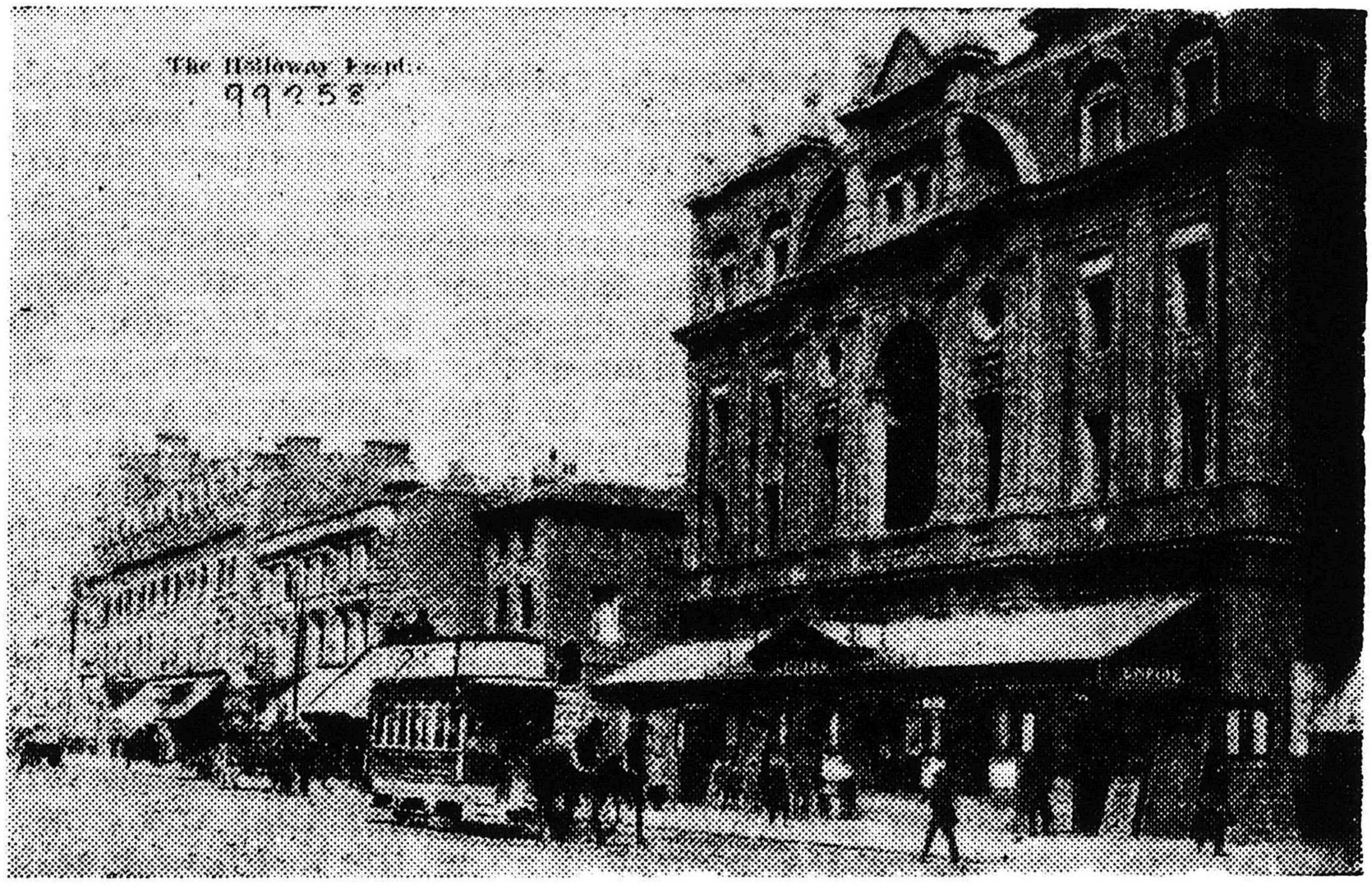
It is indeed curious to consider men make the gods that themselves worship.
—THOMAS CARLYLE

The setting was local. I was fifty years younger than I am now as I read these reports. At that time, Clerkenwell and the beginnings of Islington, but not too far north, was all the world to me. I had no thought of Scotland. Yet today I am a Glaswegian. Did I return to Clerkenwell it would be as a stranger. The streets I knew so well are no longer warm with interest and with friendship. Many of the folk with whom I talked so earnestly are away, a few in the English-speaking New World, utter aliens to the place that was once all the world to them. Most, I fear, have passed beyond the veil. It was inevitable yet it seems sad. It is the change that comes with time. Only one thing has endured. The message. That remains the same. It is fundamental. And it will achieve its purpose. Yet in these Clerkenwell days of half-a-century back I was charged with changing my opinions, with being unstable, and indicted for my extremism. Not to myself as an individual, but to the spirit of my youth, was attributed a desire to bring about violent changes and upheaval.

Time has vindicated me completely. I was not unstable for I reproduce these old reports of my speeches and activity and endorse them now. Time has routed the views of my critics and their organisations are dead or dying. Time has proved that violence belongs to conservatism and orthodoxy. Had the world

ISLINGTON EMPIRE, 1906

Tastes in entertainment have changed considerably since 1906. The Cinema has replaced the Vaudevilles and Theatres of that period throughout the world. This is a picture of the Empire, Islington. as I knew it in 1906. I knew it from the outside rather than from within. The old horse tram, of which I was very fond, marks this era.





A Scene at the Rag Fair, 1906

THE PEDLAR'S MARKET



CALEDONIAN MARKET

One of the sights of London in my 1906 days was the famous Caledonian Market, now passed into history. It was held on Tuesdays and Fridays. The market was derived originally from Bartholomew Fair, held at Smithfield. Islington folk dubbed the market the "Cally". It was known more widely as "Rag Fair".

The "Cally" was a vast open market which attracted crowds of visitors. I often took advantage of it for advancing my Atheist and Socialist ideas. It was said that you could buy anything **"for the price you like"**. It had 2,000 stalls and pitches.

During the two world wars, additional buildings were erected, and it was termed, more respectably, the "Pedlar's Market".

The Second World War finished the market. A year after peace was declared the market was closed completely.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to Mr J. Wilkinson, the editor of the "Islington Gazette" for his great courtesy in lending me the blocks that I have used in this instalment.

listened to me and given me my due, it would not be in the shocking state it is today. I look back to these *Islington Gazette* reports of my activity with some pleasure and reassurance. Only there is agony there as well. For I looked upon the world and I protested in sorrow. The narrow interests that deprived my contemporaries of eyes with which to see condemned me to impotence.

Let the reader turn back to these Islington and Clerkenwell days and read what I said and tried to do. Think, with backing, what I might have done. All these years of struggle I have been the victim of a conspiracy on the part of those who censured me that they might flourish in studied uselessness, the "Yes Men" who from this angle or that, resisted change and opposed truth. They were resolved that I should not make the message known. They dreaded its possible success.

On Wednesday, November 7, 1906, the *Islington Gazette* reported:

THE TRUE RELIGION

I.L.P. Attacked

A large and enthusiastic gathering convened at Garnault Place on Monday to listen to a lecture delivered under the auspices of the London Secular Society, by Mr Guy A. Aldred, on "The True Religion: a Cantless Gospel."

As was to be expected, the lecturer, in his opening remarks, dealt with the municipal elections, and declared that he was not sorry to witness the Progressive rout. So far as the workers were concerned the change meant little difference, the only point being that avowed anti-Socialists and open enemies of Socialism had succeeded the workers' false friends. Little thanks were due to the ridiculous actions of the late Council, as little as was due to Mr. Haldane for his discharges at Woolwich Arsenal. The lecturer only hoped that the people would be so educated by their mis-governors that they would return working-class Socialist representatives next election.

With that he passed on to his lecture, after having reminded his audience that his object was to deliver a religious and theological address.

His opponents accused him of not being religious, but that only showed that they did not know what religion meant. Religion, correctly defined, did not mean the clinging to dogmas that were false, but a trusting to one's own thoughts against all the specious traditions of the Church. It was the abiding by one's own judgment, the belief in the supremacy of service, the simple art of thinking for others, that constituted true religion. And this was the only religion that need be taught to children—a religion taught by all the great philosophers and masters, a religion that stood independent of the questionable existence of a questionable Christ and mythological Jesus. This religion was the religion of cooperation, the religion of the Socialist and Atheist. Whole heavens superior to the Bible creed, it taught him to treasure up the many flowers of thought that blossomed forth in the Bible pages amid the weeds of tradition and obscenity.

He was reminded that one could not pour new wine into old bottles without the bottles breaking. The honest and philosophic Socialist could not, therefore, compromise either philosophically or on historical grounds with the church and the chapels that only took to discussing Socialism because "it was in the air". When it was not in the air, it had been left to Atheists to discuss.

"Every true Socialist, therefore," continued Mr Aldred, "should make it his business to attack the I.L.P., with its Christian sophistical sentimentalist and political wire-puller, Keir Hardie." For Keir Hardie's attitude on the Zulu and Egyptian question, the lecturer admired him; but that had not helped the workers. When, however, he lectured to P.S.A.s, and denounced his father and mother because they were Secularists; when, in addition, he said true Socialism meant true Christianity, Mr Hardie was betraying the workers, revealing his ignorance, and talking utter nonsense. And with the I.L.P., its specious Christian pretences, its parsenic membership, its invitations to bishops, and false pretences, there was no time to compromise. If the Liberals were false friends of Labour, so were the bethelised I.L.Ps.

On the other hand, if there was no time to compromise with the Christian Socialist, it was equally certain that there was no reason for compromising with Secularist, whose aspirations never got beyond disestablishment and disendowment. He (the lecturer) was in favour of both; but he could not close his eyes to the fact that they had done these things in the U.S.A., and it had not abolished poverty there. No; the only religion that would emancipate the workers was that of kindness,

of sobriety, of a revolutionary Socialism as equally opposed to the Secularist Individualist as to the Christian Socialist; a religion of justice and happiness here, of an immortality of truth-loving and reincarnation of good; a religion that was not cast down by the leer of the priest nor inculcated by prayers for the dead; a religion without crape, widow's weeds, and widowers' lands; one of love and joy, the joy of service well performed, the happy knowledge of a benefited posterity. Such was his creed—the creed of a revolutionary who denied God and owed no allegiance to the King.

Questions and opposition having been replied to, the meeting closed amid applause, the audience breaking up into small groups for the purposes of discussion.

Thursday, October 4, 1906, the *Islington Gazette* reported:

INVALID AUTHORITIES

Mr Aldred and His Critics

Following upon a well-attended and attentively listened to lecture on the previous Monday on "Christianity and Women", Mr Guy A. Aldred, on Monday last, delivered a reply at Garnault Place, to the letter of Mr Leonard Smith.

In the course of this reply, he argued that authorities proved nothing, and that Mr Smith was wrong in his facts. He, the lecturer, did not say he was born a Christian, but only that he was brought up a Christian.

As to the quotation from Renan, his "Vie de Jesus" was admittedly a work of fiction, and in his first edition he accused Jesus of conniving with the disciples and Lazarus at a theatrical display in planning and prearranging the latter's "resurrection". This, in itself, was incompatible with a belief in Jesus as excelsior. Nor was Renan a sceptic, but a Theist and a believer in a future life.

As to Christ having made wine and thereby condoned drunkenness, he advised Mr Smith to read the second chapter of the Gospel of St John. Joseph Barker was never editor of the *National Reformer,* but only second editor, Charles Bradlaugh being the real editor. To quote him and Lecky on matters of opinion proved nothing, for the lecturer could cite Christians against them, the result being that the facts were unaltered.

Concluding with a plea for total abstinence, and for the constitution of reason as the final court of appeal, Mr Aldred then replied to several questions submitted by Mr Lowry, a Roman Catholic, on evolution.

It may be interesting to add that, with the beginning of November, the local Freethinkers are convening indoor meetings at Mr Aldred's residence, when Christians, as well as Secularists, will be invited to read papers.

18. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY REPUDIATED

Oh, that perpetual law and order, I often think it is that, that does all the mischief in this world of ours.

—HENRIK IBSEN

I do not know what reports appeared in the *Islington Daily Gazette* during 1907 of my Garnault Place addresses. There must have been a number, but the cuttings and papers are lost.

The *Gazette* for Tuesday, April 2, 1907, published a report of my conflict with E. E. Hunter, who subsequently proved himself to be a careerist, although not altogether too successful.

The report read:

SOCIALISTS AT VARIANCE

Mr Aldred Challenged

The meeting which was held at Garnault Place on Wednesday evening last by the Social Democratic Federation proved to be a strenuous one, largely owing to the vigorous opposition of Mr Guy A. Aldred, who was formerly a prominent member of that organisation. He frequently quarrelled with the executive, however, over the right of free

speech, the need to attack Christianity, and the farce of so-called Parliamentary representation. This led ultimately to his withdrawal, and the Social Democratic Federation has no more vigorous opponent than its former champion—the local "minister of the gospel of revolt", who is opposed to the tyranny of a central executive and of a State that cannot possibly represent the people for that reason.

On Wednesday last Mr E. E. Hunter was the speaker for the Social Democratic Federation, and he urged the workers to cease to have faith in Liberals and Tories, but to rely on the vote and the return to Parliament and municipal bodies of Socialist legislators and administrators.

Question time having arrived, Mr Aldred asked whether it was not a fact that no Socialist could be returned to Parliament under a capitalistic and monarchial constitution? Hunter's retort was "Certainly not." He then challenged Mr Aldred to mount the rostrum, his challenge being accepted with great alacrity. In so far as Hunter may have sought to instil the principles of revolt and the class-war, his opponent was not opposed to him. What he did oppose was the idea of the workers getting any reform from Government. Laws were made for the defence of the powerful and the oppression of the weak, and whoever assisted in the placing of a law upon the Statute-book was helping in this rotten process. Mr Hunter had said that the constitution did not prevent the return to Parliament of Socialists. But that bland statement was untrue. Every member of Parliament had to affirm (at least) loyalty to the monarchial and capitalist regime; and even if he did not the economic conditions would prevent him getting Socialist legislation. For it had to be remembered that the army and navy and cost for national defences did not come from the workers' pockets, but from out of the taxes paid by the capitalist class, out of the surplus value of which Labour was robbed. The military being paid by this class, they need only refuse to recognise the paper laws of Parliament, and head the military against the constitution. The Social Democratic Federation was a revisionist and reactionary organisation. It mouthed the class war, and supported capitalist candidates at election times. If it was opposed to "peace, retrenchment, and reform" it nevertheless stood for the miserable shibboleths of citizen armies, abolition of the House of Lords, disestablishment of the Church, etc. Well, let them work for those things. They could abolish the Upper Chamber, disestablish the Church, and create their citizen army; and their poverty would not be touched. The workers could abolish poverty if they wanted to; they had the power today, as always—the power of direct action.

Mr Hunter, in reply, declared that Mr Aldred was formerly a brilliant and lucid expositor of Socialism. He had now become an Anarchist and enemy of the people. He preached bloodshed, murder and rebellion. He preached disorder and every man for himself—the devil take the hindmost. He (Mr Hunter) believed in peace, and political capture of the machinery of legislation.

At the conclusion of his speech Mr Hunter was obliged to leave in order to go to work but the Chairman invited Mr Aldred to reply, which he did. In so doing he ridiculed the bogey of bloodshed, to which he is opposed, pointed out that H. Quelch believed in anything from "the ballot box to the bomb"; insisted on the necessity of opposing supernaturalism; and declared that he did not believe in the narrow individualism his opponent had attributed to him. Recognising the social labour that produced and developed the genius, he believed in every man producing according to his ability for the community, and taking from the community according to his needs. Mr Hunter had challenged him to a debate. The challenge was accepted.

ERRATA

Volume 1, No. 7

Page 189. Luke 4, 18 quotation. Last word read "bruised" for "buried".

Volume I, No. 8

Page 178. Col. 2. MacKenzie poem, at end. Read "NOR last" for "Not last".

Page 187. Col. 2. Line 14. Date should be July 14, 1906.

19. REVOLUTIONARY MANIFESTO

Monarchy would not have continued so many ages in the world had it not been for the abuses it protects. It is the master fraud that shelters all others.

—THOMAS PAINE

This chapter consists of an article reproduced exactly as published in the columns of the *Islington Gazette* for October 28, 1906:

A REVOLUTIONARY MANIFESTO

The Labour Party Attacked

Mr Guy A. Aldred, of 133 Goswell Road, E.C., who came into local prominence recently owing to his claiming to be entitled to the title of "Reverend" and styling himself "Minister of the Gospel of Freethought", writes to inform us that he will shortly publish an autobiography in the form of an open letter to the King. The MSS. is already in hand. The preface is addressed "to the electors of the Parliamentary Division of Central Finsbury", and reads as follows:

Gentlemen—In view of the fact that there is no probability of a General Election taking place before next November, and as I shall then be eligible for return to Parliament, I am taking this early opportunity of laying my views before you. As, however, so much care has been taken on the part of my Christian opponents to misrepresent the natural development of my mind, I am publishing this pamphlet describing, in full, the events of my career up to the present moment; and presenting, in chronological order, the details of my psychological evolution, so that the reader may note for himself the manner of, and reasons for, my passing from a defender of the Christian Religion and Conservativism to my present position as Atheist and Revolutionary. In so doing, I have allowed this autobiographical fragment to take the form of an open letter to the King, as I desire you to understand fully the manner of man who is seeking your suffrage—one who denies the existence of God, and owes neither allegiance to King nor Master. I am a soldier of truth, a minister of revolt, and my one duty in life is to respect myself.

As you know, the General Election in which we were plunged last December and January, resulted in the return to Parliament of a Radical majority, and of thirty men pledged to the principles of political independence in the interests of labour. Amongst their number were sixteen who claimed to be Socialists. But in so far as Mr Keir Hardie has identified Socialism with Christianity, and this little group has either affirmed or sworn loyalty to the present monarchial and capitalistic contitution, I do not think much can be said of the revolutionary aspirations of the Labour Party. Nor, when one remembers their defence of John Burns against the attacks of Mr Claude Hay, their failure to take a stand in the House on behalf of secular education, their timorous limited Feeding of Children's Bill, introduced by Mr T. W. Wilson "in the name of Christianity", can there be found any reason for congratulating Labour on its success at the polls. The moral is clear. The people have been duped once more—this time just as certainly by so-called "straight" "Socialist and Labour" candidates, as by Liberal and Tory politicians. And the reason is to be found in the damnable spirit of compromise that is abroad.

Let us clear our minds of cant, and note what Socialism involves, to wit:

1. A refusal to affirm loyalty to the present Constitution.
2. Such a philosophic outlook on society as recognises that the economic determinism that renders inevitable the natural supercession of the present state of society by the Socialistic, invalidates all belief in the capricious interference of any deity.
3. A recognition of the fact that reforms (so-called) cannot remove the gyves and fetters from off the masses; since all such reforms are passed by capitalists, who merely grant palliatives to deceive the people, whose economic serfdom remains thereby unaltered.

This being so, it follows that no Socialist has ever yet been returned to St. Stephen's. I now propose to extend to Central Finsbury the opportunity of so doing. But I warn the electorate that, if returned, my fight will be on a par with that of Bradlaugh's—only

greater. As I do not intend going to Parliament to mend, but to end political humbug, as I stand as a revolutionary, and atheist at that—for all progress is atheistic—I shall not be allowed to take my seat. But I have not gone to war without counting the cost. If returned, I do not propose to palliate existing conditions, nor to support Social Democratic Federation candidates and Labour men who are willing to so palliate; I do not pretend that palliation is my object; I shall go to Westminster pledged to represent the hard-thinking section of the proletariat, who know that class-consciousness spells revolution. Mine is an assault on the "House of Pretence" in the name of sincerity and common honesty. And in this assault I do not expect the support of either the Independent Labour Party or the Social Democratic Federation, since both of these bodies provide for inane compromise, which involves a consequent betrayal of the workers.

Knowing therefore that reform comes not from Parliament, but from the street-corners, I commend my fragment of autobiography to the attention of the electorate. Should your study of it lead you to give me your confidence, remember that I am not fighting under false pretences. If returned, I shall not go to the prayer meeting and thank a non-existent deity; but I should attribute the success to the intelligence of the proletariat, or that section thereof, that constituted the electorate of Central Finsbury.

Should this manifesto involve prosecution for seditious libel, let me say that I am acquainted with the law on the subject, and am quite prepared to take the consequences.—In the interests of truth, yours sincerely,

GUY A. ALDRED
Minister of the Gospel of Revolt

Mr Aldred informs us that details as to arrangements for indoor meetings of the London Secular Society can be obtained from him on receipt of a stamped-addressed postcard. In a postscript to the above preface, Mr. Aldred defines his attitude towards religion as being: *"Nous respecterons tout ce qui est religion, mais nous combattrons sans merci tout ce qui est superstition"*—in parody of the declaration of Clemenceau.

APPENDIX

HENDERSON'S BOMB SHOP

In No. 6, pages 133 and 134, reference is made to Henderson's famous revolutionary book shop in Charing Cross Road, London, known to the movement as Henderson's Bomb Shop.

This store was a most important centre of thought, discussion, and true Bohemian association.

Neil Bell, the novelist, never disguised his Atheism for the sake of winning public favour. In his novel, a pretended autobiography, *I Am Legion* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950), he describes a visit that the nominal-autobiographist depicted himself as having paid to Henderson's Bomb Shop just after the Bolshevik Revolution. The description gives a true picture of the Bomb Shop and its importance to the revolutionary intellectual life of London:

"During the summer term at St Jude's there were many half-holidays and on one of these towards the end of May I was walking along the Charing Cross Road when glancing across the road I was struck by the words 'The Bomb Shop' on the facia of a bookseller's. Amused and interested and not remembering having noticed the shop previously I crossed the road and entered and abruptly found myself in a world new to me. I believed myself well-read. What small foundation there was for this belief will be evident from the fact that of all the unfamiliar names on the books ranged about me were many that should certainly have been known to me. They were not. I hardly know why. My reading, I suppose, had just not chanced in that direction nor had my circumstances been such as to bring me into contact with people who believed in their mission to right the world's wrongs. Even then it might be thought that I should have

been familiar with the names Karl Marx and Leo Tolstoy. I was not. They meant nothing to me; nor did Maxim Gorky; Edward Carpenter; Edward Bellamy; James Thomson and a dozen others. As I strolled slowly round the shelves I came upon scarcely one name familiar to me.

"But The Bomb Shop differed in other ways from the bookshops with which I was familiar: it was crowded and not so much with buyers as with readers. It might have been a public reading-room. It was not just cursory skipping. Readers were leaning up against shelves utterly absorbed in something they had taken down from a shelf or picked up from the display in front: a book, a pamphlet, a broadsheet. And what a strange crowd they made: men of half the races of the world were there: Hindus, Chinese, Japanese, Africans; and not a country in Europe unrepresented. And all of them men.

I spent an interested half hour there and during the next few weeks I came again on several occasions. June the fifth was one of those occasions. I can fix the date because so many flags were flying half-mast for the first anniversary of Kitchener's death. That he was still so publicly mourned was some measure of the tremendous prestige which still clung to his name.

"I had now been to The Bomb Shop sufficiently often to nod to some of those whom I had come to think of as habitués, yet for all I knew they might have frequented the place no more than I, for I had not yet spoken to anyone or been spoken to.

"But that afternoon a rather shabbily-dressed young man with a black beard (itself no rarity in The Bomb Shop) noticed I was glancing through a book by Havelock Ellis and said, in a marked but not strong foreign accent, 'You have read much in Havelock Ellis?' I smiled and said I had only just learned of his existence.

"He told me I should read Ellis and presently we found ourselves talking about Russia and he told me he was a Pole.

"'And so you hate the Russians, too,' I said."

Here follows a most interesting conversation, just the kind of thing that constantly took place in those years in the Bomb Shop.

Mr Henderson had a keen interest in the freedom of the press and although he never incurred imprisonment he certainly risked arrest and trial during the first world war.

In the House of Commons, on Tuesday, October 31, 1916, Sir W. Byles asked the Secretary of State for War to explain why an officer from the War Office, accompanied by two officers from Scotland Yard, visited the premises of Mr Henderson, Publisher, Charing Cross Road, on the previous Thursday afternoon, and seized a large number of copies of a small book, consisting of two plays by Mr Miles Malleson. Sir W. Byles asked the War Secretary to point out the incriminating passages in the book.

This challenge was not accepted. Instead the War Secretary fell back on the authority of his position.

Mr Foster admitted the facts and added: *"The book in question is, I am advised, a deliberate calumny on the British soldier. The visit to Mr Henderson's premises was ordered by the competent military authority."*

Mr Morrell took up the cudgels. He asked if the Under-Secretary was aware that Miles Malleson's book had the approval of men very well-known in the literary world, who were also men of unimpeachable patriotism. Morrell added: *"Has the Hon. Gentleman read the book? If not, will he do so?"*

The questioning concluded:

Mr FORSTER: I am advised that the book is very properly suppressed, and I am sorry to hear that it has the approval of anybody.

Mr MacCALLUM SCOTT: Has the hon. Gentleman any personal knowledge of the book at all?

Mr FORSTER: No.

Mr SCOTT: Will the hon. Gentleman take steps——

Mr SPEAKER: To ask so many supplementary questions is not fair to hon. Members who have given notice of questions to come on later.

Thus the Government was protected from enquiry by the methods of parliamentarism whilst ignorantly outraging the right of the common people to read and discuss.

In all this ugly business of military suppression, Henderson's Bomb Shop played a great part as a centre of thought, enquiry, and resistance.

CONTENTS

PART VI. "Islington Gazette" Activity (Concluded)

20. Overlooked Correspondence
page 217

21. Mr Burrows is Unfortunate
page 220

PART VII. THE ATHEIST CAMP

1. Freethought Adventures
page 223

2. Annie Besant
page 225

3. Atheism to Theosophy
page 227

4. Saladin's Attitude
page 229

5. Bradlaugh Memories
page 231

6. The Lady of Adyar
page 233

7. General Gordon Judged
page 235

8. Gordon and the Slave Trade
page 238

ILLUSTRATIONS

Annie Besant
page 226

"Islington Gazette" Headlines
page 237

PART VI. "ISLINGTON GAZETTE" ACTIVITY—*Concluded*

20. OVERLOOKED CORRESPONDENCE

All that is rational is real, and all that is real is rational.

—HEGEL

The Clerkenwell and Islington period seems to have been so full of activity that it is difficult to advance beyond it. The *Islington Gazette* correspondence went far beyond Islington and Clerkenwell and opened up all the meeting places of London as centres of conflict. It may be thought that some of my critics were stupid in their orthodoxy. To my mind they were: but their ideas of 1906 were no more foolish than those expressed in the columns of the press today by many who are reputed scholars and outstanding public men.

In the *Sunday Times* today (1957) a discussion is occurring on the question of life after death. With great caution, and excessive delicacy of language, Earl (otherwise Bertrand) Russell states quite clearly that there is no life after death. This commonsense view has been met with great opposition by folk who cannot swallow the idea that death is final. I admit that this idea is not very pleasant and it is disturbing to man's vanity. How its truth can be questioned I cannot see. The priests and sorry prophets of superstition do deny its truth. Their arguments are not one whit superior to those advanced by the working men and the small middle-class people who opposed me in 1906-7. They were despised only because of their economic status and not because of their foolish pretences. The pompous conceit of a cardinal is more obnoxious to my mind than the ignorant error of a working man dreaming of some heaven beyond the grave where he may find a justice and leisure denied him on earth. I sympathise and understand but I oppose. Earthly Paradise for some generations to succeed us, there may be. Super-earthly paradise for oursĕlves, alas, is beyond all possibility of realisation.

In summarising various phases of my Clerkenwell and Islington discussion, I have overlooked much correspondence that I think ought to be recalled. It is possible to summarise it and to pass on to later events. Really events, and not just discussion. Argument, however, means thought: and thought is the basis of all true action. I ask the reader not to despise this record of discussion in which I rejoice. After all, it is part of my education and mental and moral evolution.

The *Islington Gazette* correspondence omitted from previous chapters includes the following:

[The date at the top of each letter is the date of the issue of the *Gazette* in which it appeared.]

Wednesday, July 18, 1906

THE GOSPEL OF FREETHOUGHT

Sir—Mr Guy Aldred seems to be of opinion that the scientist who strove much to popularise cremation is more worthy than the Prophet of Nazareth and His Gospel. I do not think so. Cremation finally reduces to nothingness the body which is dead, whereas Christianity, looking upwards, beyond death, seeks to endow with eternal, glorious happiness that wonderful ethereal creation, the living soul. Again, Mr Aldred belittles the Bible's teaching. But who has not beheld in actual working the splendid transformation it operates in its adherents, taking them literally at a bound away from cold, purposeless, never-satisfying unbelief, into intellectual rest, with an ideal noble beyond compare, ever leading on in the path of goodness. And then the children. Can we find it in our hearts to deprive them of the example of the tender Messenger, who said so sweetly, "Suffer little children to come unto me." Nay! To do so would be a crime. Atheism means Paradise lost. The Christian religion shows us the way to Paradise regained.

I am, etc.,

Barnsbury Square, N. F. RICHARDS

Wednesday, September 19, 1906

A REPLY TO MR ALDRED

Sir—I read Mr Aldred's article in your issue of the 10th inst., on "Freethought and the test of Works". I cannot help wondering how anyone can make such glaring mis-statements as he does. Mr Aldred speaks of my trivial personalities, and my bombast in my letter of 5th inst. in your columns. He says that I failed to make good my case at Garnault Place on Saturday the 1st. To this I say, that others who were present beside Mr Aldred, had their opinion as well as he, and more than one of my hearers on that occasion have told me that I certainly had the best of the argument. One of them said that Mr Aldred was simply sat on. In my letter of the 5th inst. I challenged Mr Aldred to a second debate on the same subject at Garnault Place on the following Saturday, and as he failed to reply either to accept or reject the challenge, I naturally concluded he had had enough of it, which was a sign of defeat.

I see Mr Aldred is very fond of self praise. I have not the time or space to answer all his statements in his article of the 10th, but for him to say that Christ condoned drunkenness at the marriage feast of Cana is deliberately false. Mr Aldred says he denies the possibility of a God, and almost in the next sentence he contradicted his own statement by saying he is so spiritually minded that he prefers Monism to Christianity, for to be a Monist is to acknowledge one God and one alone. How can Mr Aldred be truly spiritually minded if he denies God? Where does he get his spirituality from? Mr Aldred denies the existence of self-sacrifice. How does he account for those who have given up their lives for the good of others; some even to the giving up of fortunes and becoming poor in order that others might be lifted to a higher state. Is not that self-sacrifice?

Mr Aldred pleads for an enlightened selfishness. The more selfish a man becomes, whether it be enlightened or no, the more he thinks of his own self gratification and leaves others to look after themselves as best they can. He speaks of slum life after nearly 2,000 years of Christianity. That only bears out the statement I have just made. He speaks of respected Christian churchwardens, landlords, and jerry builders, who have thrived on conditions that have spelt the depravity and stultification of child life. I say that no Christian man has willingly or knowingly done that, and I challenge Mr Aldred to name one case.

My sympathies are with the lady whose letter appears in the *Gazette* of today's date and signed "Disgusted Christian Woman", and I have wondered whether it was the same lady who wrote some time ago, and who said, that although she was a Christian (or words to that effect) she was not ashamed of her daughter enjoying the company of Mr Aldred. At any rate, I am strongly inclined to think the letter did not proceed from the pen of a lady, but was either written by Mr Aldred or a male friend of his; such is my belief, and I am reminded of St. Paul when he wrote: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy, iv. 3-4.)

Mr Aldred makes a mistake when he says that Christianity is a compound of fanaticism and asceticism. The New Testament not only teaches us to take thought for the next world, but it also teaches us to be happy in this world and make the best of this life. St. Matthew did not write anything to inculcate a hatred of those who did not subscribe to Christian beliefs, for Christ himself said in Matthew v. 44, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you," and as to Mark xvi. 17-20, "Yes, faith in God can save man, if man will only exercise that faith."

Mr Aldred's nonsense is supreme when he compares God to a mere conjurer. Men and women have slain their fellow creatures, but it has been in direct opposition to the teachings of Christ Himself. Christianity has never preached militarism, but has taught us to live in peace with all men, and to say that the Salvation Army has restored very few social wrecks is a proof that Mr Aldred has either not studied the Salvation Army work, or he has wilfully closed his eyes to actual facts. True humanitarism is selfishness in the extreme; whilst Christianity, which is the only true religion, teaches unselfishness and brotherly love.

I have said before the Freethinker, Atheist, Agnostic, are saying they hope to do something bye and bye. The Christian is already doing something for the good of his fellow creatures; we have evidence of this in every direction.

ALFRED P. WALKER

September 12th, 1906

September 25, 1906

CHRISTIANITY AND FREETHOUGHT

Sir—Having frequently attended the meetings at Garnault Place, I regret Mr Aldred's personal attacks upon those who differ in opinion from him. I can cite numerous cases where Mr Aldred has done this, but I think even he would be sorry were I to do so.

I myself do not think that the human race is so bankrupt of morality as one would infer from Mr Aldred's remarks at Garnault Place. It is to be hoped that Mr Aldred will have better luck in the future than he appears to have had up till now, and that his confidence in individuals and in society will become stronger as a result.

If he will so frequently attribute unworthy motives to others he must expect letters of the tone of that sent by Mr Burrows.

I am, etc.,

THOMAS THURLEY

5 King's Cross Road, W.C.

Wednesday, Sepember 26, 1906

Sir—The inanities of A. P. Walker are most amusing. If he desires to oppose me, why does he not attend my meetings at Garnault Place and do so? To think, however, that I am going to accept the challenge of any individual who only represents himself is a mistake. If Mr Walker will get himself put forward by any Christian body as its representative and consent to a joint committee being appointed to decide on rules and subject of debate, I shall be happy to meet him.

He accuses me of being fond of self-praise, and then, in order to demonstrate his own modesty, declares he "simply sat on me". Surely such modesty is worthy of the Christ who said, "Look upon Me, behold how lovely I am"—in substance. As to whether he did sit on me, I leave for your readers who were present to judge. I will only say that he apologised to his audience for not being able to speak properly: referred to the sacred books of the Hindus, the Vedas, as "King Vedas" and a contemporary of Buddha; suggested that the Girard College in Philadelphia was founded by Father Gerard, S.J., despite the fact that the "Father" is still with us, whilst Stephen Girard flourished 24th May, 1750—26th December, 1831.

It now seems that he has never studied economics nor history. It is, of course, open to any child to denounce the philosopher and truthseeker. But I would suggest that if the readers of your journal are to be expected to take Mr Walker seriously he should first study General Booth's "Darkest England" scheme; then master Proudhon, Smith, Marx, and Bakunin; and finally read Dean Milman's histories of Latin and Roman Christianity. He might learn then how not to write nonsense. Finally, I would advise him to obtain a good dictionary. "Monism" has no relation to the idea of God, but implies a belief in underlying unity and harmony. "Spirituality" is a subjective condition, not an objective gift, as Mr Walker would seem to suggest.

I am, etc.,

GUY A. ALDRED
(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought)

Thursday, October 4, 1906

Sir—From time to time we read a great deal about Mr Guy Aldred; why, I know not, for I fail to discover anything of an intellectual or instructive character in anything that he has ever written to the *Gazette*. Years ago I used to listen to the late Mr Charles Bradlaugh, Charles Watts George, W. Foote, and others, who were intellectual and clever men, who did not talk the wretched nonsense that Mr Aldred writes and talks. By the way he criticises others he should be the personification of fairness. Now, I observe in his references to Jesus Christ, that if he can pick out something which he thinks disparaging to the great character of Jesus Christ he appears to experience great satisfaction.

I would ask Mr Aldred to be fair. Are there no events in the life of Christ which appeal to his sense of mercy and forgiveness? If there are, why has he not given us both sides of the picture. I am, etc.,

J. B. RICHARDS

September 26th, 1906

Thursday, October 11, 1906

Sir—I am pleased to learn, from the letter of Mr Newbold, that the Vicar of St Peter's intends to take the active steps mentioned in his letter in order to combat infidelity. Contrasts, like comparisons, are sometimes odious; certainly, when indulged in by Christians, they are all-sufficient as indices to weak intellects, more or less, and biassed minds. Mr Lee, whom I have often opposed, is said never to change his opinions, and is, therefore, held

up as an example of superior intelligence. Joseph Barker was everything in turn, nothing very long, and in his changes never followed a consistent course of evolution, and he is hailed as a brilliant exponent of Freethought who saw the error of his ways! It seems that everything is subservient to making good the Christian case.

As to J. B. Richards's remarks, I would gladly take them to heart, only other Christians and representative ones—to wit, Rev. A. J. Waldron, Messrs Bailey, Baker, and Green of the C.E.S., as also W. R. Bradlaugh—accuse Mr Foote of not being a thinker, and of being a scurrilous blackguard. The Rev. Z. B. Woffendale, also, has praised me in order to denounce Mr Foote. I have come to the conclusion, therefore, that Christians only praise opponents, in most cases, when it is necessary to denounce other opponents.

As to the character of Jesus, to the student of the Gospels it is obvious that there are eight or nine different Christs. There is Christ the fanatic and negationist, the Christ who attacked the hypocrisy of his time, and who was denounced as I am being denounced. For that Christ I have respect. But seeing that Christ is put forward as the Son of God, as an impeccable saviour, it is necessary, in order to do justice to the memory of real heroes, that we should show his imperfections. Cease to claim that Christ is infallible, and, supposing he lived, I will make allowances for human weaknesses.

In conclusion, I would suggest to the Vicar of St Peter's that there is still time to offer me the opportunity of 15 minutes opposition to Mr Lee. If he will offer me the opportunity, I will gladly accept it, and acknowledge his fairness. Or if, on a future Sunday, he will debate with me himself on "Christian Theism v. Philosophic Monism", I will give 5s. towards the funds of his church. I am not out to "sit" on people, but to seek for the highest truth possible. I admit the fallibility of human knowledge, I desire to uplift the fallen, but I know that whenever I identify myself with a cause that is not avowedly revolutionary, no pious individual will identify him, or herself, with that cause.

Here is a test. I am invited to assist forward good causes and work with "Christians". I am prepared, as a non-smoker and total abstainer, for one Sunday afternoon, to address a Christian P.S.A. on "Scientific and Ethical Reasons for Being a Total Abstainer". Would any cleric or society be willing that I should do so, and preside at any such meeting? I await a reply.

I am, etc.,

GUY A. ALDRED
(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought)

October 4th, 1906

Much of this correspondence must be read in conjunction with previous chapters to understand the war that was waged against superstition fifty years ago in Clerkenwell and Islington.

21. MR BURROWS IS UNFORTUNATE

We must look upon things as they are, and not as we would wish them to be.

—NAPOLEON

Reference has been made to Mr H. A. Burrows, the Christian Evidence lecturer and sometime supporter of the Progressive (which then meant Liberal) Party in Municipal politics. Writing to me from Victoria, B.C., Mr Burrows admitted he had turned to Rationalism before leaving Britain about forty years ago. In London, also, he joined and spoke for the S.D.F., after I had left that alleged Socialist organisation. Mr Burrows will not catch up with my radicalism. It is clear, however, that his dogmatic orthodoxy represented a point of view from which he had to retreat.

As an orthodox Christian Evidence lecturer Mr Burrows developed the menacing attitude of the hooligan. Later, as a Social Democrat and a Rationalist, he became milder. He never apologised for his earlier errors either of thought or style. Which is a serious defect of character, in my opinion. His avowed changes of view may be considered as apologies.

From the *Gazette* of Monday, September 17, 1906, I reproduce the following letter:

Monday, September 17, 1906

MR ALDRED AND THE FINSBURY COUNCIL

Sir—It is a sign of fair-mindedness when a paper throws its columns open to a discussion of any kind, and I am glad to see "Onlooker", Mr Walker, etc., are having a fair show. I can not, however, understand why so much fuss is made over the stupid remarks of Mr Aldred. "Mr Aldred attacks the Progressive Party!" Who is Mr Aldred? Is he a man well-known as a clear and logical reasoner and thinker? Is he a man who is known to be a worker in any local effort on behalf of others? Is he a man with settled convictions and a programme? Certainly not. He is simply a spluttering youth of 19, whose endeavour is to gain notoriety by abusing those who work for the betterment of others. The tone of his remarks is such that one feels that if he had power to treat his opponents as badly as he does the English language, they would soon be dead. Settled convictions? He has within the last few years been a Christian, Agnostic, Theist, and Atheist—I mean philosophic Atheist. He has joined one or two other movements, the last one being the Social Democratic Federation. Now he is leaving that body, and presumably he will join something else. In due course he will no doubt reach the Roman Church and the Tory Party.

Let me add in conclusion that the Finsbury Labour League and Trades Council is not to be identified with everything and everybody that bears a Progressive label. As to the attacks upon Mr Gillett and others, I think that all of the gentlemen mentioned are known as men who have been trying to improve Finsbury and help the working classes. What has Mr Aldred done? Has he done anything to change the conditions of the workers? No. He has been too busy changing his opinion. And this is the person who is to be regarded as a fit and proper person to pay attention to. For the present I leave him to the tender mercies of your correspondents, but in all seriousness I would ask him to be very careful what he says on the platform, for I fear that he will not be gratified by a slander action, but it is possible that some more drastic measures may be adopted. I was only present during part of his meeting on Monday, but I could see from the attitude of the crowd that they were getting tired of listening. I am, etc.,

HENRY A. BURROWS

14a Clerkenwell Green, E.C.

To this I replied in the *Gazette* for Tuesday, September 18, 1906, as follows:

CHRISTIANITY AND FREETHOUGHT

Sir—I have read with interest—not to say without amusement—the remarkable epistle of Mr Burrows. Perhaps the most amusing thing about the whole matter is the fact that whilst relegating me to the realms of oblivion and classifying me as one of the class of nondescripts to which he himself belongs, your correspondent addresses his letter from the Peel Institute—i.e., from 14a Clerkenwell Green. Is it not, therefore, curious that, seeing Mr Aldred is of so little importance, an inspired attack upon me should appear in your journal?

As to my change of opinion, Mr Burrows deliberately mistakes the truth. Instead of being an Agnostic before I was a Theist, I was first a Christian, having been brought up one; then a Theist, and now an Atheist and Agnostic. This is a perfectly natural and evolutionary change, and had Mr Burrows studied more and revelled less in self-conceit, he would appreciate the fact, although he might dissent from my opinions. But if he is thirsting for knowledge, I will inform him that I am known both as a writer and speaker in Atheistic and Freethought circles, i.e., as a representative one, as also in the Socialist movement.

As to my relations with the S.D.F., I may say that I have withdrawn my resignation, without surrendering my principles. The logic of my revolt from conventional humbug has resulted in my cleavage from all revisionism and in my identifying myself with the avowed revolutionary section of class-conscious Socialists.

Mr Burrows praises the local Trades Councils and sounds Mr Gillett's praises. Worthy trumpeter! But will he show us who are the legitimate Trades Unionists on the Trades Council, and what Mr Gillett has actually done? So far as I can see, the Progressive Party merely went in on a false election cry, and have pursued ever since a hybrid Socialist-cross-Moderate, capitalistic, humbugging policy.

He suggests that I may join the Tory Party. That, for me, is utterly impossible. But I prefer Mr Goulding, who loses an election by saying that Chinese slavery does not exist in the Transvaal, to the Liberal, Mr Steadman, who, having won the election by saving it does, turns round and subsequently endorses what

Mr Goulding said when it was not safe to do so. And that Mr Steadman did do so is obvious by his silent consent when Mr Churchill described Chinese slavery as a "terminological inexactitude".

As to my meeting on Monday, the meeting closed amid general endorsement of what I said, and the only interruption came from a drunken Catholic and some Christian trained under-aged hooligans. But the truth is, noting the success attending the efforts of our Socialist candidates in Islington, the local Progressives are fearsome lest they should be beaten in Clerkenwell. And we mean to fight them and to split their votes. But what is the local Trades Council anyway? One would like to have Councillor Shaw's opinion thereon, as also on Mr Burrows' epistle. Not that Mr Burrows is of any importance as a local or a public man, but only that he has had greatness thrust upon him.

Apologising for this intrusion, and regretting that I should have had to tell the truth so plainly,

I am, etc.,

GUY A. ALDRED

September 17th, 1906

The career of the late Sir G. M. Gillett has been dealt with in this autobiography, and also in *Socialism and Parliament*. Except for the fact that he was a Liberal whereas today the climbers are Labour, he was exactly the same type of character. The whole aim of politics is to climb to place and office.

In 1906, Mr Gillett was very busy climbing. He used the struggling, or rather the wriggling, of the oppressed people as a ladder towards the top. My opposition at the time, and my censure since, were merited. They revealed vision and understanding. There is no point in condemning Gillett because he was Liberal and refusing to condemn his later copyists and successors because they are Labour. To do so is to combine folly with hypocrisy.

From a report of the Finsbury Borough Council published in the *Islington Gazette* during 1906, I excerpt the following item:

Last night the MAYOR (Councillor W. Reason, J.P.) presided at an ordinary meeting of the Council, which was held at the Town Hall, Rosebery Avenue.

Ald. CROWLE-SMITH said it had always been the custom of this Council and of the Vestries preceding them to congratulate a colleague in receiving an honour. Councillor George Gillett had just been made a Justice of the Peace for the County of London; and as no man deserved the honour more for good and true public work done, he (the speaker) had great pleasure in moving that this Council offer its congratulations to their colleague. (Hear, hear.)

Mr DALDORPH seconded, Ald. Pond supported, and the motion was carried with acclamation.

Councillor Gillett briefly replied.

Just one happy family! So George Gillett became in due course, L.C.C. Councillor, M.P., Knight, etc. Labourism, then outlawed, has gone one better. Labourists have become Barons and Earls. All thanks to parliamentarism!

My friend Burrows changed! He gave up Christian Evidence but what a mild rationalism! He gave up Progressive Liberalism for Labourism and Social Democracy. He spoke for the Shoreditch Social Democrats and visited their hall which I frequented also. The Social Democrats, in time, proved to be no better than the Progressives. His progress was worthless.

The development it registered throws some light on my associations at that time. I quickly despised the Freethinkers, the Social Democrats, the Intellectuals with whom I came in contact. My opposition was sound, to my mind, and has been justified by later developments.

PART VII. THE ATHEIST CAMP

1. FREETHOUGHT ADVENTURES

The idea of Progress as the law of life, accepted and developed, verified by history and confirmed by science, is the banner of the future.

—MAZZINI

The year 1907 was a most interesting and exciting year to be associated with the Freethought movement in Britain. Although I have inclined always to an exact and precise statement of my views on politics, religion, and ethics, I have never been a sectarian. I have a certain warmth of mind that makes me opposed to armchair philosophy. I believe in thought and I believe in action. I have never felt that one was an apology for the other. This has given my opponents an opportunity at times for criticism that was quite untrue. I have never concealed my thought. I have never been afraid of odd associations in my action. During 1907, apart from my Clerkenwell activity for the London Secular Society, I spoke all over London for the National Secular Society. *The Freethinker*, edited by G. W. Foote, gave me as little official notice as possible. Foote regarded me as an invader and treated me as such. Yet I never sought to disrupt the society and never tried to secure any official status in it. To Foote, I was a convenient private soldier. I am not sure that he did not regard me as a member of the awkward squad.

On my part I did not have too much regard for Foote. His appearance always seemed to be a little artificial. He was an actor rather than a speaker. I never viewed him as an orator, although the Freethought movement of his generation did. I thought him unoriginal and to my mind the essence of oratory is spontaneity and originality. His platform style was pompous and theatrical and he carried himself with an imposing dignity that was utterly false. His phrases were studied yet shallow. A great offence in my eyes.

My first contact with Foote was at Camberwell Branch of the National Secular Society. There was a mutual antagonism. He probably saw me as an upstart, notwithstanding the fact that my manner was shy and retiring, except when in actual conflict on the platform. I saw him a would-be priest and I did not like priests, even when they styled themselves Freethinkers and Atheists. He resented rivalry and both Chapman Cohen and he were most anxious to write down Robert Blatchford for his temporary lapse into materialist propaganda of a Freethought character. They saw Blatchford, with his determinism, his *Not Guilty* pleas, and his *God and My Neighbour* philosophy, as a menacing rival. Foote in particular, and Cohen as his lieutenant, had to be not only the priests but the popes of the Freethought movement. This explains Foote's one-time bitter opposition to Charles Bradlaugh whom he attacked mercilessly. It explains Foote's conspiracy against Annie Besant, whom he feared. It explains Foote's contempt for Richard Carlile, whose memory has been served badly by the entire Freethought movement.

Neglect by the official Secular Society faction did not prevent me from doing the donkey lecturing work for the Freethought movement, during this year 1907 in particular. I have been a donkey all my life. In every movement, or every phase of the one movement of the great struggle towards Freedom, I have been a donkey. I have done the rough and tumble work, spoken at street corners in all weathers, built up groups and branches, gone to prison for my uncompromising zeal, and at the end I have been told that I had no sense of organisation or team work. All this, by persons whose love of power and careerism destroyed the organisation they had used. The team work always meant working to give them status.

During 1907, I was most active as a Freethinker outside of Clerkenwell and Islington, or rather, outside of my own grouping. I did

a lot of work under the auspices of the National Secular Society.

From the *Freethinker* columns I cull some announcements of my Sunday lectures for the N.S.S. In each case I give the date of *The Freethinker*, which was published nominally on the Sunday. The date, in each instance, is also the date of the meeting. I would not repeat my name but I wish each announcement to be published exactly as it appeared in the columns of *The Freethinker*.

The announcements, selected at random, read as follows:

1907, July 7. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "What Constitutes Freethought?" Brockwell Park, Guy A. Aldred, 3.15, "Christian Criminals and Atheist Moralists"; 6.15, "Robert Taylor, C.E.S., Infidel".

July 28. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "Buddha and Buddhism". Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. R. Theakstone, "From Christian Chorister to Freethought Advocate"; 6.15, Guy A. Aldred, "The Crusades".

August 4. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "Trinitarian Heresy". Brockwell Park, Guy A. Aldred, 3.15, "Richard Carlile"; 6.15, "Hypatia".

August 11. Bethnal Green Branch N.S.S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), G. A. Aldred, 3.15, "Christian Criminals"; 6, "Why I am an Atheist".

Woolwich Branch N.S.S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, G. A. Aldred, a Lecture.

September 1. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "The Philosophy of Pantheism". Brockwell Park, Guy A. Aldred, 3.15, "The Ethics of Freethought"; 6.15, "Atheism and Agnosticism".

September 8. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred. Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen.

September 15. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred. Brockwell Park, 3 and 6, F. A. Davies.

October 6. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, a Lecture. Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, a Lecture.

October 13. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, a Lecture. Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. R. Theakstone, "The Cradle of Christianity".

October 20. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, a Lecture. Brockwell Park, 3.15, Louis B. Gallagher, a Lecture.

October 27. Bethnal Green Branch N.S.S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.30, G. Aldred, "The Church's One Foundation".

November 17. Camberwell Branch N.S.S.: (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Christian Indifferentism *v.* Atheistic Socialism"; 7.30, Business Meeting.

November 24. Camberwell Branch N.S.S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road: 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, a Lecture.

I believe that *The Freethinker* during 1905 and 1906 published announcements of lectures I delivered under N.S.S. auspices. However, these notices of my Sunday meetings are sufficient to establish the extent of my activity on behalf of the National Secular Society. 1907 was, I believe, my peak year for general activity in London as a Freethinker. After, my Atheism became merged in my Socialist and Anarchist activity.

Louis B. Gallagher accompanied me to many Social Democratic meetings. At the Southwark S.D.F. meeting in 1906 he angered Robert C. Morrison by his opposition and so inspired the Free Speech discussion in *Justice*.

F. B. Theakstone was chairman of the N.S.S. Brockwell Park meetings and was keen on the discussion as to the meaning of Atheism.

In Brockwell Park I came into conflict with the Rev A. J. Waldon.

It will be seen that I lectured on Richard Carlile and the Rev. Robert Taylor, better known as *"the Devil's Chaplain"*. The N.S.S. did not mind eulogies of Robert Taylor. They looked somewhat askance at references to Richard Carlile.

During this important period the political conduct of J. M. Robertson, in the matter of the question of Secular Education, called for censure.

The deaths of Gerald Massey and Moncure Conway caused a great deal of consideration of the first principles of Freethought.

Without actually repudiating his Atheism, Robert Blatchford gave up his open avowal of Atheism.

I have lasted the distance as an avowed Atheist and evinced no desire to modify or to qualify my avowal.

In Brockwell Park, the great champion of Christian Evidence was the Rev. A. J. Waldon.

He was a hooligan and altogether a somewhat shady customer. In the end he grew in disfavour with his own people and, I believe, died under somewhat poor circumstances. He wrote a play which was popular for a time entitled *Should a Woman Tell?*

In July 1907, Waldon announced that he had converted a "renowned" Atheist named James Carl. Unfortunately, this man was known to F. R. Theakstone, of the Camberwell N.S.S. Carl was a conjuror and general adventurer. He had many conversations with Theakstone on the subject of Atheism and always expressed horror at the thought of Atheism. After his supposed conversion he was questioned by Mr G. M. Nicholls and other members of the Camberwell N.S.S. and admitted that he had never been an Atheist. The exposure of this bogus conversion in no way disturbed the Rev. A. J. Waldon, who went his way attacking Atheists with the ancient orthodox weapons of slander and abuse.

2. *ANNIE BESANT*

She could not be the bride of Heaven, and therefore became the bride of Mr Frank Besant.

—W. T. STEAD

I must have interviewed Annie Besant on behalf of the *Agnostic Journal* on Sunday, July 16, 1905. The suggestion came from Saladin (W. Stewart Ross) who had some weird sympathy with mysticism and occasionally played with theosophical ideas. I had no sympathy with mysticism precisely because I thought that it was not mysticism at all, but downright banal materialism. I was opposed to theosophy but I had a great interest in Annie Besant. I admired her courage, which I may have overestimated. I objected to her treatment over her two children because of her Atheism. I liked her writing. I fell in with Saladin's suggestion. The interview was published in the *Agnostic Journal* for July 29, 1905, above my *nom-de-plume,* "Ajax Junior".

I did not and do not believe in *noms-de plume*. I like publishing what I think above my own name. Of course, as editor of various papers, I have published many unsigned articles: but the paper itself made it clear that such articles were from my pen. I only used the *nom-de-plume* "Ajax Junior" when I wrote more than one article for the same paper. I wrote a great deal for the *Agnostic Journal.* Later, I did the same for the Anarchist weekly, *The Voice of Labour*. In both cases my *nom-de-plume* was the same, "Ajax Junior". This was a tribute to Annie Besant, who wrote above her own name and also used the pen-name "Ajax". It emphasised my respect for her and indicated her influence.

Unfortunately, I have not got a copy of the *Agnostic Journal* containing my report of this interview. I have bits of the article but the paper itself has been folded and torn. The paper has passed through many hands and has suffered seizure in many police raids. It is unreadable now and part of it has disappeared altogether. Perhaps some reader will give me a copy. It should be reprinted for it throws light on my mental development.

The interview was not as interesting as it ought to have been. Had I written it two years later it would have been a much more interesting record. It suffered also from appearing in the *Agnostic Journal.*

Hardly any of the Freethinkers were worthy of respect in the matter of politics and economics. Although Richard Carlile was an individualist he thought in the terms of the social struggle and believed in all power to the mechanics' institutes. He was miles ahead of Bradlaugh and the others who came after him. They were simply liberal politicians and utterly worthless. "Saladin", as a Freethinker, whilst expressing a general low opinion of politicians, was not prepared to make war on them individually or to expose them. His interest in Annie Besant was confined to her Freethought traditions and her Theosophy. To my mind this was rather a ghostly approach and it handicapped my treatment of the subject. What I had to say, in detail, about Annie Besant's political thought and record was eliminated from the article. I was told that Freethinkers would not agree on that. Even though they d's-

cussed and differed, they would find joy in such differences of approach so long as it was a matter of theology or abstract philosophy. Detailed politics were outwith the circle.

This fact made it impossible for me to do full justice to the interview or the influence that the interview had on my mental and moral development. Annie Besant gave me many pamphlets that were rare. I studied them during the two years that followed. They proved more fascinating to me in 1907 and I appreciated their worth more in 1907 than at the time Annie Besant gave them to me. The two years' perusal and constant return to them made a great difference in my concept of them as treasures.

The pamphlets which Annie Besant presented to me were: *What Is The Use of Prayer?; The Story of the Soudan; The Myth of The Resurrection; Why Should Atheists Be Persecuted?* These were from her own pen and were published in The Atheist Platform series of penny pamphlets (16 pages), by the Freethought Publishing Company, at 63 Fleet Street, London, in 1884. That is two years before I was born.

Annie Besant gave me other pamphlets in this library. I list only those written by her.

She gave me also: *Theosophy and the Law of Population,* written by her, and published in London by the Theosophical Publishing Society, 7 Duke Street, Adelphi, London, and also in New York and Madras, July 1891; *Why I Became a Theosophist,* her apology, published by the Freethought Publishing Company, London, in 1889; and *Theosophy and Its Evidences,* published by the Theosophical Publishing Society, undated, but presumably about 1891. On the back of this pamphlet, Annie Besant advertises her Socialist and Freethought writings, which I thought was greatly to her credit. These were published by the well-known Freethinker, R. Forder, at 28 Stonecutter Street, London.

I considered most valuable the following further pamphlets that she gave me (all written by her):

(1) *Gordon, Judged Out of His Own Mouth* (1885).

(2) *God's Views on Marriage* (1890). Dedicated to the then Bishop of Manchester.

(3) *The Redistribution of Political Power* (1885).

(4) *The Teachings of Christianity.* Written debate between her and the Rev. G. F. Handel Rowe. (1887.) On the title page Annie Besant describes herself as "Atheist".

(5) *The Natural History of the Christian Devil* (1885).

(6) *The Law of Population* (1889), which enjoyed a circulation of 155 thousand.

All these were published by the Freethought Publishing Company, London. Annie Besant also gave me Knowlton's famous pamphlet, *Fruits of Philosophy,* and another quite useful book deemed obscene at the time of its publication, *The Wife's Handbook.* The first was published by Minerva Publishing Company, 14 Clerkenwell Green, 1892, and the second by R. Forder, in 1893. She certainly was not wanting in a sense of freedom of thinking and the right to read and to enquire.

Annie Besant had a great part in my mental evolution. She linked me with Charles Voysey.

Voysey was born in March 1828. This was during the Richard Carlile period. Annie Besant was born on October 1, 1847. The Carlile period was over.



ANNIE BESANT
Portrait taken by E. H. James, January 1931

3. ATHEISM TO THEOSOPHY

I do not believe even eye-witnesses when they tell me things opposed to common sense.
—VOLTAIRE

Annie Besant made the acquaintance of Charles Voysey in 1872, the year after moving to Sibsey with her husband. She was recovering from bronchitis, then known as congestion of the lungs. In the autumn of 1872 her mother brought her to London.

For three years, Voysey had been the topic of discussion in scandalised clerical circles. An Oxford man, he was then Vicar of Healaugh. Replying to an episcopal denunciation from York Cathedral, he had avowed: *"I would rather be a righteous Atheist than a man chiefly concerned about my orthodoxy"*. Annie Besant, in her vicarage garden, followed the two years' struggle of Voysey. He was deprived of his living by an Ecclesiastical Court and the decision was upheld by the Privy Council. He went to London and established his Theistic pulpit.

Annie Besant was fascinated by his rebellion. She went to London to hear him preach and submitted essays to him. Voysey determined to assist her to revolt.

The wealthiest supporter of Charles Voysey at that time was Thomas Scott, whose home was a centre of liberal propaganda. Voysey introduced her to Scott and his circle, which included Bishop Colenso of Natal. She was charmed by Scott and Voysey suggested that he should publish her writings against orthodoxy. He did so and thus commenced her break with her husband as well as the Church. She visited Voysey and Mrs Voysey at their home in Dulwich and read Theodore Parker, Francis Newman, and Frances Power Cobbe. Finally, with the help of Voysey and Scott, she wrote and published two pamphlets:

On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth, "An Enquiry into the Nature of Jesus by an Examination of the Synoptic Gospels. By the wife of a Beneficed Clergyman. Edited and Prefaced by Rev. Charles Voysey."

According to St John, "On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth. Part II. A Comparison between the Four Gospels and the Three Synoptics. By the Wife of a Beneficed Clergyman. Edited and Prefaced by Rev. Charles Voysey."

Annie Besant was the daughter of William Page Wood and had what the bourgeois would term a scholastic and scientific education. All her surroundings were orthodox. In 1867, at the age of twenty, she married the Rev. Frank Besant, Vicar of Sibsey, Burton, Lincolnshire. There were two children—a son and a daughter—of the marriage. This was a failure and the parties separated in 1873. Besant was a person without character. Escaping to the silence of her husband's church, Annie Besant taught herself to speak some time before the separation.

After this separation, Annie Besant came under the influence of Charles Voysey and became a Theist. Her Theism lasted less than a year and in January 1874 she was a member of the National Secular Society. Before breaking with Charles Voysey she wrote the beautiful hymn *"Never yet has been broken"*.

Annie Besant was twenty-six when she came under Voysey's influence thirteen years before I was born. He hoped for great things from her conversion and was disappointed sadly, when, within a year, she joined forces with Charles Bradlaugh, and proclaimed herself an Atheist. When I became a Theist in 1902—twenty-eight years later—Voysey hoped that I would repair the injury caused by Annie Besant's defection. Alas! I also became an Atheist within a short period and that reopened the wound for which Annie Besant's progress towards Atheism was responsible. This was a curious link between Annie Besant and myself. I was conscious of it when I interviewed her. Its interest was emphasised by the number of years that separated Annie Besant's association with Voysey and my own. From the standpoint of rationalism, it would have been much better for Annie Besant to have remained a Theist than to have passed through Atheism to Theosophy. From a worldly viewpoint, I would say that Annie Besant lost nothing by turning Theosophist. She wasted her intellect and turned her great gifts as a speaker and writer, and even thinker, to unworthy ends. In my opinion, the vanitv and sectarian leadership ambition of G. W. Foote contributed to Annie Besant's behaviour. She lived under Capitalism. She desired a place in the sun.

By conspiracy, she was denied this place as Charles Bradlaugh's successor. So she turned to Madame Blavatsky and became her successor. Freethought is not charlatanism. Theosophy is. Annie Besant turned charlatan. Yet she was never attacked for doing so.

In 1877, Annie Besant published her *My Path to Atheism*. Very eloquently she depicted the path, in the following terms of almost romantic symbolism:

"Its first steps are very rough and very painful; the feet tread on the ruins of the broken faith, and the sharp edges cut into the bleeding flesh; but, further on, the path grows smoother, and, presently, at its side, begins to peep forth the humble daisy of hope that heralds the springtide, and, further on, the roadside is fragrant with all the flowers of summer, sweet and brilliant and gorgeous, and in the distance we see the promise of the autumn, the harvest that shall be reaped for the feeding of man."

In 1891, she revised her autobiography, making her path to Atheism only part of her story. She described her mental evolution as being from *Storm to Peace*. Previously, she had explained how she was led to embrace Theosophy, in her further searchings after truth, in a farewell address to Secularism, delivered at the Hall of Science, London, on Sunday, August 30, 1891. This address was entitled: *From 1875 to 1891: A Fragment of Biography*.

The *Daily Chronicle* reported this speech. After stating that she stood for the first time on the Atheist platform on February 28, 1875, she declared that she would follow

"wherever the light may lead me, through whatever difficulties. . . . In 1872 I broke with Christianity, and I broke with it once and for all. I have nothing to unsay, nothing to undo, nothing to retract, as regards my position then and now. I broke with it, and I am no nearer to it now than when I first joined the ranks of the National Secular Society. I do not say my language was not harsher than it would be now, for in the first moments after a great struggle you do not always think for the feelings of others with the charity and toleration which would commend you to them. But, upon the groundwork of my rejection of Christianity then, I have nothing to alter, and I stand on that ground today as I stood then. . . . In the newer light to which I have passed, return to Christianity has become even more impossible than in my older days of the National Secular Society. Then I rejected Christianity, seeing its illogical impossibilities: now I understand them as I never understood them before. As regards belief in the personality of God, I have nothing to say different from what I said many years ago."

The first question I put to Annie Besant was whether the Press had reported her correctly in attributing to her the statement that Theosophy was the very antithesis of Agnosticism. If so, did she realise the manifest injustice done to those Agnostics who declared that, although unknown to them, on the physical plane of being, upon another plane of being they might be able to attain to a certain knowledge of the universal spirit? I then proceeded to quote Saladin as a representative Agnostic, who held many of Madame Blavatsky's ideas to be feasible, whilst pointing out that I did not do so. To this Mrs Besant replied that those who adopted the attitude of Saladin upon this question did not use the term Agnostic in its ordinary sense, or in the sense of the coiner, Huxley. According to the ordinary meaning of the term, the primary statement of Agnosticism, was that it was without *gnosis*, without the faculties of learning anything concerning the universal spirit, whereas Theosophy asserted the contrary, and offered the direct antithesis to this position. This, explained Mrs Besant, in answer to the question arising out of this reply—as to whether her attitude towards the idea of a personal God corresponded with her statement upon this point which we have quoted above—did not involve a belief in a personal God, with all its attendant absurdities of relative and limited absolutes; but rather in a number of Gods, or superhuman beings, who were one with man in their innermost nature as manifestations of the universal spirit. As Madame H.P. Blavatsky had pointed out in her *Key to Theosophy*, published in 1884, which professes to be a clear expository catechism of the ethics, science, and philosophy of Theosophy, the god of Theology is a bundle of contradictions, and Theosophy will have nothing to do with him.

A question arose out of Annie Besant's statement as to the cosmopolitan character of the Theosophical Society. She said that Theosophists imposed no dogmas upon those

who wished to join the Society, since, if the doctrines of Re-incarnation and speaking with the dead were true, the truthseeker, by studying, must of necessity be led to embrace them. As a result there were to be found among the members of the Society many who did not embrace these doctrines. Theosophy was not to be confounded with the Society. The basis of agreement which was sufficient to constitute one a member of the latter was an ideal of truth, and an active belief in the reality of brotherhood. Every Secularist believed in these as two cardinal points of doctrine. Theosophists held that without a belief in man as a spiritual being, one in essence with the universal spirit, there was no logical basis for their acceptance of the doctrine of brotherhood.

Roughly, this concluded the interview. Annie Besant discussed Charles Voysey and my association with him. She carried herself with dignity and one could say with stateliness. There was a very definite suggestion of the High Priestess about her manner. She smiled at some references I made concerning the Indian War of Independence. I no longer viewed that struggle as the Indian Mutiny, although I was easy in my references to it. Four years later I was most particular not to refer to the great event of 1857 as a mutiny but insisted on terming it the War of Independence. At the time of the Annie Besant interview my attitude was more lax and I used the two descriptions to apply to the same event. I was growing up but had not arrived.

Saladin was interested only in Annie Besant in relation to Atheism, Agnosticism, and Theosophy. I did not share his interest in the esoteric. I was interested in Annie Besant as a political reformer. She was a member of the Fabian Society for a few years, when that society did a great deal of educational and research work. Its members, however, were mostly intellectual charlatans and pretenders. When the true history of the Socialist movement comes to be written, these Fabian pioneers will be estimated as utterly worthless characters. From 1887-1890 she served on the London School Board. She was an early member of the S.D.F. Politically, she interested me.

4. SALADIN'S ATTITUDE

Today, I Atheist, in a Christian community, stand as did the Christians in the second century in a Pagan society; and I put an apologia, a defence, a vindication of my faith.
—ANNIE BESANT, 1884

I was interested in India. Theosophy had caused Annie Besant to study Hinduism and she was accepted by a large number of Hindus as a champion in the Hindu struggle towards Freedom. I thought and think that her attitude towards the Hindu struggle was exactly the same as her former Socialist attitude in Britain. She desired to produce no radical change although she used sometimes the language of liberation. The Fabians and the Social Democrats were not really Socialist in purpose, although they used Socialist phrases. Annie Besant, with an Indian domicile, was not really Hindu in philosophy or purpose, although she used Hindu mysticism of concept and language.

Annie Besant was the cousin of Sir Evelyn Wood, who served in the so-called Indian Mutiny, against those who fought for Indian Independence. This added to my interest in her activity.

I believed very much in woman's freedom and equality. I have objected since my later teen-age to woman changing her name in marriage. I object to this "*nee*" business before a woman's name. Why a woman must take a man's name has been always a mystery beyond my comprehension. I said this to Annie Besant. She was not altogether pleased but she admitted that there was truth in my protest and comment. It was a reluctant admission. Which angered me a little.

I noticed that she wore her wedding ring. Considering her relations with her husband, the Rev. Frank Besant, his depriving her of her children until they came of age and decided to join her, I was astonished at this evidence of conventional orthodoxy.

Annie Besant also wore H. P. Blavatsky's magical ring. One could not view this symbol of superstition without recalling Annie Besant's attitude towards birth control activity. Certainly I was under her spell a little. It took me a while to escape from the enchantment. But I was firm, even at the time, on the ring and name business.

I wanted to refer to this name question in my report of the interview but Saladin urged that to do so would offend his readers, and that it had nothing to do with Freethought. The final decision rested with him and I gave way.

Similarly I was much concerned with Annie Besant's attitude towards militarism and her exposure of General Gordon. Annie Besant stood by this severe criticism and I thought that it ought to be known. Again, Saladin urged that political discussion would result, and interfere with the propaganda activity of the *Agnostic Journal*. I held that Freethought applied to politics as well as to religion. Once more, however, I gave way. Doing so greatly weakened the political value of the interview. I think that the unwillingness of Freethinkers to discuss political issues is a real moral loss. As I learned at the time, and particularly during the year 1907, this failure struck at the one point with which Secularists and Freethinkers concerned themselves, the right of Secular Education.

Whatever explanation there was for her defection from Atheism to Theosophy, and it was defection, Annie Besant gained in status with the bourgeoisie. This was strange because Madame Blavatsky was denounced openly as a Russian charlatan. Madame Blavatsky was a somewhat coarse, vigorous personality. She was a charlatan but she was most emphatically Atheistic. Annie Besant was never once denounced for charlatanism but she toned down her Atheism until it became more and more a mystic pantheism merging into Theism. It made God more and more plausible by a simple process of insinuating his personality without parading it. A clever spiritualistic trick but still a knavery of thought.

When Annie Besant was an Atheist, she was deemed a bold, bad woman by the nominally Christian newspapers. Mrs Besant, the leader of Theosophy, was praised for her ability, eloquence, and character. In 1907, lengthy reports were published in the British press of her "remarkable" addresses. A Bournemouth paper in July 1907 devoted a whole column to her lecture in the local Prince's Hall on "The Place of Masters in Religion". The lecture was so much rhetorical moonshine, well calculated to please the religionists of every denomination, except the Catholics. One passage merits a few moments' attention.

Mrs Besant was reported as follows:

"The lecturer passed on to speak of the fresh efflux of spiritual life which was needed in the days of Thomas Huxley, and declared that the growth of the materialism which was at that time so rampant, and was even now the subject of complaint by the clergy, meant, in its ultimate consequence, the death of civilisation, whilst the triumph of Agnosticism meant the triumph of the body and the mind over the spirit, and that meant the death and decay of humanity, for the spirit in man was the one eternal verity which ever asserted itself, however it was denied, which appeared again, however much it was ignored."

Mrs Besant herself took part in propagating the "materialism" of the days of Huxley. She called herself a Materialist, which Huxley never did. She was the close colleague of Charles Bradlaugh, and wrote for years in his *National Reformer*, which was declared every week, on its front page, to be an organ of Atheism. She used then to declare that religion meant the death of civilisation. She *knew* she was right then; and she *knew* she was right in 1907!

Annie Besant, the Theosophist, declared that the triumph of Agnosticism meant the triumph of the body and the mind over the spirit. Of course, this word was used to mean character and the ideal. She was talking absolute nonsense.

When Charles Bradlaugh died, Annie Besant paid a tribute to his memory, which made it clear that she considered him a very great man. Atheism had no deteriorating effect on him. Nor had it on Annie Besant herself. She was a noble and more inspiring personage in those days than she was later. For her Atheism she suffered much victimisation amounting to persecution. As she herself stated, she walked on stony ground. Later, she trod, as she confessed, a primrose path. For some strange reason, as a Theosophist she enjoyed the good opinion of the majority, where, before, she had endured its loathing and hatred. An Atheist, she was an insulted outcast. A Theosophist, she associated with

the most "respectable" people. Things changed with her. I consider Annie Besant, the Atheist, the more admirable person.

Although Annie Besant was tricked over the forged Mahatma letters by Judge, who was exposed completely by a non-Theosophical journalist, she never apologised for being deceived and deceiving. She never undeceived those she had misled. The forged Mahatma letters helped her to some status and fame. The respectable world never even asked her to seek forgiveness. It forgave her without uttering an unkind word. Would Annie Besant the Atheist have been treated thus?

5. *BRADLAUGH MEMORIES*

My dear, dear friend.
—ANNIE BESANT

Charles Bradlaugh was born at 13 Bacchus Walk, Hoxton, London, on September 26, 1835. He died on January 30, 1891, and was buried at Woking. By his own wish, he was buried in complete silence.

A Centennial Committee was organised in 1933 and Annie Besant was one of its members. She wrote a tribute to Bradlaugh which contains very little suggestion of mysticism. It is clear and straightforward.

She describes Bradlaugh as *"my dear, dear friend"* and refers to his *"vivid and intense personality"*. She praises him for his great virtue, in that those closest to him *"admired him and loved him more than any other"* person. Intimacy endeared him. She writes, I believe, with great truth and accuracy, of his *"consummate audacity and supreme respect for law"*. She explains that Bradlaugh's *"most apparently defiant act"*, would have thrown over it *"the impenetrable shield of legal right"*.

This certainly describes Bradlaugh's battle over the oath question.If his stand is analysed it is seen to be one of bold and patient assertion of a very great and simple principle in opposition to a vexatious and irritating invasion by authority. His patient courage finally defeated a cowardly, mendacious, and entrenched reaction. The principles may seem to be of very small value in the social struggle, yet it was a fundamental and important citizen right he maintained and asserted. I think Bradlaugh's greatness was a very small quantity in his make-up. I do not like his Atheism because it is pedantic and mincing. Yet I must confess that every stage of the struggle over the parliamentary oath and the right to affirm revealed a greatness of character. He dominated the scene. Without violence despite temptation, with tremendous dignity and unconquerable patience, he stood his ground, a man of great courage, and terrible enduring calm. He shrank his enemies by his posture. Yet all the time he was a sick man, doomed to a comparatively early death, and harassed by debts caused by his propaganda. The greatness of Bradlaugh may have been very narrow in its scope but within that scope it was true and splendid. No wonder Annie Besant, his co-worker, viewed him with such lasting veneration.

Bradlaugh must have known that he was a dying man when he debated with H. M. Hyndman in 1890. That year he resigned his Secretaryship of the National Secular Society which he had founded in September 1866. That resignation was formal. During the previous year it was obvious that he could not continue in that position. His health could not bear the strain of lecturing and writing. He was succeeded by G. W. Foote, who, previously, had denounced him so vigorously. As I have stated, I think that the internal affairs of the Secular Society explain Annie Besant's Theosophy.

Bradlaugh set the tone of Secularism since his time towards Atheism. His *Plea for Atheism* was published in 1864 and reprinted in 1865, 1877, 1880, and 1883. The essential statement of his plea is as follows:

The Atheist does not say "There is no God". but he says, "I know not what you mean by God"; the word "God" is a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation.

I do not deny God because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception; and the conception of which, by the affirmer, is so impossible that he is unable to define it to me. If, however, "God" is defined to mean an existence other than the existence of which I

am a mode, then I deny "God" and I affirm that it is impossible such a God can be.

To my mind this statement is a mere playing with words. It is cautious, almost respectable rubbish. I prefer Richard Carlile's clear declaration that there is no such being as God and no such place as heaven in which a God could dwell. Bradlaugh's Atheism was a miserable pretence although his stand on the oath was a magnificent expression of principle.

Annie Besant never repented her association with Bradlaugh. She denied none of her political past. As a Theosophist, she insisted that Bradlaugh was a Christian. She foolishly repudiated the value of her birth control activity. In India, she maintained a kind of hesitating political radicalism.

Some five years after my interview with her, George Lansbury became M.P. for Bow. Annie Besant sent her Hindu followers to see Lansbury from time to time, because of her Socialist past, and they asked him if he would stand for Home Rule for India—within the Empire. There is no doubt that Lansbury was in favour of complete Indian Independence. His mind was completely radical and libertarian.

In 1916, Annie Besant was interned for her activities as leader of the Home Rule League. She entered into an active alliance with Tilak, then recently released from jail. She lectured, wrote, published, and attended conferences throughout India. Gandhi, returning from South Africa, said that she "had made Home Rule a precept in every cottage". She was forbidden to cross the borders of Bombay and other provinces. The Government revived a Press Act against her work and Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras, levied several thousand rupees fines against her and confiscated her presses. She became more extreme and in June 1916 she was interned at Ootacammud. Her writings were suppressed. On the eve of internment she delivered a stirring farewell address. She was released in September 1916 and made a triumphal return to Madras. In December 1917, she was escorted to the Congress grounds in Calcutta as the honoured President-Elect. She mounted the rostrum to deliver her presidential address. Tilak was among her listeners and Gandhi. She was a stately figure in her white *sari* fringed with crystal beads.

The Rowlatt Act became law in January 1919. The Amritsar massacre dictated by General Dyer occurred in April following. Annie Besant defended the Rowlatt Act and adopted a non-committal attitude towards General Dyer. Hindu reaction against her was swift. She flung away her popularity and power. Gandhi replaced her. She repeated her London Freethought conduct of 1890.

In 1922, she published her *Future of Indian Politics*, in which she came to grips with the Muslim question with a vigour and directness far beyond the understanding of the Labour Parliamentarians in Britain. Only one man might have understood her, my friend Creech Jones.

Visioning the future accurately, Annie Besant stated, in this work:

In thinking of an Independent India, the menace of Muslim rule has to be considered.

This was the menace that Britain imposed on India as the price of freedom. This was the menace that Gandhi embraced. Annie Besant's approach was in line with the view of Veer Savarkar, who stands for Hindu-Muslim unity, but objects only to Muslim as alien rulers. It is, of course, the correct view.

Because she expressed this opinion, it might be thought that, at one time, in politics, Annie Besant promised to be a better Hindu radical than she had been previously a British radical or Socialist.

Actually she proved just as unsatisfactory in the one connection as in the other. Nineteen years after my interview with her, all manner of alleged Socialists assembled in the Queens Hall, London to pay tribute to her for fifty years' public agitation. Only that strange, semi-good-natured British hypocrisy of association could have contemplated such a tribute. The speakers included Haden Guest, Earl de la Warr, Margaret Bondfield, Mrs Pethwick Lawrence, Ben Turner, Ben Tillett, and John Scurr.

Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald wrote a letter of eulogy speaking of Annie Besant's "fifty years of pioneering". He did not mention that in the course of that time she repudiated the very pioneering for which she made the greatest stand and sacrifice. Haldane wrote of her "high public spirit" and Philip Snowden praised her "supreme gifts of oratory and intellect", her "energy and disinterestedness".

Eloquence she had, yes. Intellect was not shown in her Theosophy and sheer charlatanism. The parliamentary Socialists who praised her were, in the course of my life, to attain

their ambitions under capitalism, and collapse politically, without emancipating. The only one of any worth was George Lansbury, who was a trembling kind of pacifist, a little weak-kneed, but desirous of aiding the workers' struggle. Annie Besant passed from the terrible poverty of her days of Atheist struggle to world comfort and travelling like some potentate. It was a parallel careerism to that of the parliamentarian. Atheism to Theosophy via Freethought! One great happy family of entrenched parasitical hypocrisy.

Her Hinduism threatened, for a time, to be of greater value to humanity than her Theosophy and her earlier Fabian and Social Democratic Socialism. The threat was merely a passing spasm.

I regret that Annie Besant impressed me even for a moment in my youth. Without doubt she was a person of great gifts who could have played a tremendous part in the struggle towards human emancipation. She failed utterly. So did the Freethought movement to which I belonged.

6. THE LADY OF ADYAR

Annie Besant was fascinated by accounts of Madame's [Blavatsky] manifestoes in India.

—GERTRUDE M. WILLIAMS

It is strange how the various threads of personal contact that have made up the warp and woof of my destiny have crossed each other. Charles Voysey and Annie Besant—with years between that rule out all conscious imitation and conspiracy. And then the *Indian Sociologist* business of 1909, yet to be related. This brought E. H. James of Concord, U.S.A., then living in Paris, France, into close association with me. Two years before the death of Annie Besant, James interviewed her in India and photographed her with her consent. Annie Besant died on September 26, 1933. J. M. Robertson died on January 5 of the same year. He was born on November 14, 1856. In 1907 I became firmly opposed to Robertson for his attitude towards Secular Education. This was the same year as the popularity of Annie Besant's theosophy compelled me to take my stand against it as being the *un*-wisdom from the East.

E. H. James, in his work, *I Tell Everything*, a book on India sub-titled *The Brown Man's Burden,* printed in Geneva and published in Concord, Mass., U.S.A., styles Annie Besant *"the lady of Adyar"*.

James interviewed her in January 1931, and dated his account of the interview, Madras, the twenty-third of that month.

I quote his account in part, because it is almost the last pen-portrait published of her. It is written by one who knew me intimately. His association with me dates back to near the time of my own youthful interview with Annie Besant in London. What a strange period of incidence and coincidence it was!

E. H. James's pen picture of his 1931 interview read as follows:

Mrs. Annie Besant is the president of the Theosophical Society which has international headquarters at Adyar, seven miles from Madras. She is a woman who for fifty years has stimulated the thought of thousands of people all over the world. Where is her equal among women in English history? Theosophy has for its motto: "There is no religion higher than truth." The great object of theosophy is "to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour".

A few days ago Mrs Besant, now in her eighty-fourth year, went to Trichinopoli (pronounced Tritchinopoli) to preside at the meeting of the Humanitarian Conference, where she said: "The freedom of India is a work to which I have given some fifty years of my life. May I live until Indians rule India! No nation can hold a high position among the nations of the world until she is free."

I was in Madura when I read those words in the paper, and I headed straight for Trichinopoli in the hope of seeing Mrs Besant presiding at the conference. I had seen her only once in life. It was in a sleeping-car going from Kansas City to Denver in 1897. She was travelling west with the Countess Wachtmeister and Miss Wilson. I sat, by some inter-

esting accident, on the opposite side of the aisle. I was going west in those days as a young man to make my fortune, which I never made.

I reached Trichinopoli at 9 p.m., hoping that I had got there in time to see Mrs Besant preside at the conference. As I opened the door of the compartment to get out, there was standing there before me, waiting for me to get out, so that she could get in, a little old lady with snow-white hair. It was Mrs Besant. With her was another lady, helping her to get into the car. It was Miss Wilson. It did seem a little "occult".

The third time that I saw Mrs Besant was at Adyar, on the porch, where the cool breeze blows in from the Bay of Bengal and where, beyond the palms, the eye, weary of India's waterless, muddy landscape, catches the fresh blue sea and white surf breaking over a bar of yellow sand. . . .

Thinking of the advanced age of the lady of Adyar, I had made a resolve not to stay longer than fifteen minutes. But it was no use to count the time. Time was abolished. . .

That day in Trichinopoli, I went to the Hindu temple where Mrs Besant had presided over the Humanitarian Conference. The conference had adjourned, and the chairs used by the delegates were piled up ready for removal. But something else was left there—a lesson, a sermon. This temple is the largest in India, and the place where I saw the chairs piled up was just in front of what is called the Hall of 1,000 Pillars. It is a dark, cave-like place, a gloomy wilderness of columns, pilasters, monoliths, with weirdly chiselled figures representing animals, gods and men. . . . Here, surrounded by all this dim "wickedness" and "heathenism", with painted gods and idols frowning and glowering at her from all sides, the little old English lady with white hair had stood up before her Hindu audience and told them that India must be free.

"You see", said Mrs Besant to me at Adyar, "what I like about Hinduism is its freedom from all heresies. It leaves you free to look for God, explain and understand God in your own way. That is a great help. You don't get that everywhere in England and America. Think of the choice collection of heresies that Christianity has produced. And yet, after all, it has to be so. Think what a heretic Jesus was. He never persecuted, but was persecuted. And yet Christians ever since have gone on persecuting people who didn't believe just the way they believed. So strange. Nobody in Hinduism cares what you believe or what you think. Isn't it better to draw men together by goodwill, by tolerance, by aiming high? Get at every religion by unveiling its secret. That is all there is in theosophy.

"I have spent my life along this line. I began young to search. I have been a theosophist since I was 42, and now I am 83. My brother-in-law, Walter Besant, once told me that I had a 'fatal facility'. It is easy for me to talk, to speak, to write. But I knew the danger of all this facility, the danger of falling into superficiality, and I have always struggled against it.

"I had many changes in my younger days. I couldn't get through the wall of sham and hypocrisy that was surrounding me on all sides in the name of religion. I followed for a time that great man, Charles Bradlaugh. I took up socialism, the kind represented by the Fabian Society. I know the horrors of English poverty. . . .

"So I turned and turned till I found what I wanted. One day, William T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette,* put into my hands Madame Blavatsky's book called the "Secret Doctrine", and Stead said to me: 'You are mad enough to be able to write a review of that book.' After I read the book, I asked for an introduction to Madame Blavatsky. That book made me a theosophist, and in 1891 I came to India. . . Bradlaugh once said to me (Bradlaugh and Stead were both Christians):

"'If I only had two books in the world, I would choose Emerson's Essays and the Bhagavad Gita.' Where are you falling to in America, from Emerson's Essays down to such a shameful book as *Mother India?"*

I asked Mrs Besant if she had any objection to talking about politics.

"Certainly not. Here in India the most amazing thing is the political awakening of the women. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. I have the feeling about India that I want to keep all these Indian people together. If Britain could only help. Gandhi is the most profoundly Christian man I know. But I can't understand his doctrine of civil disobedience. . . .

"It is strange that England has such an intense feeling of colour superiority. You hear Englishmen in office in India talking about Indian gentlemen as 'niggers'. Very extraordinary. The Englishman thinks that he is God's elect. So sad. I hope that Britain will not do in India what she generally does, put off the right action until it is too late. . . ."

The fifteen minutes which I had set myself in the beginning had stretched out into one hour and a half. With an immense effort of will-power, I pulled myself to saying good-bye.

"I will come downstairs and take you to the door," she said. I begged her not to do so, but she insisted on coming. We walked down the stairs very slowly. We passed the library where all the priceless manuscripts of Ceylon, Tibet, and India are collected, guarded, studied, catalogued, copied.

7. GENERAL GORDON JUDGED

When one cannot arrange matters with
God, one comes to terms with the Devil.
—NAPOLEON

I was much indebted to Annie Besant for the pamphlets she gave me so freely and so fearlessly. At least she did not hide what she had written or disavow the fact that she had written it. She did retract her views and discarded stupidly, for reasons of ridiculous superstition, her heroism and much of her radical greatness.

Between 1905 and 1907 I mused over my interview with her a lot. I read her writings. Slowly my admiration declined. There must have been an element of charlatanism in her character. Her splendid and courageous stand for birth control and her avowal of Atheism were refuted. Bernard Shaw applauded her as an orator. Can one really be an orator and wanting in sincerity? Annie Besant, the Theosophist, I came to understand lacked sincerity.

Her Gordon pamphlet, however, was a revelation. It inspired me in the struggle against imperialism. It shaped much of my life. For that pamphlet alone I have remained in her constant debt.

Charles Gordon was born in 1833. He served in the Crimean War, 1854-56. Four years later he suppressed the Taiping Rebellion and became known as Chinese Gordon. From 1877-79 he was Governor-General of the Sudan. In 1884, he was sent back to the Sudan to carry out the British evacuation. He arrived at Khartoum and was killed there in February 1885 by the Mahdi's followers.

In Britain, the death of Gordon was made the excuse for publishing his letters home describing his days as a soldier and administrator. These letters were not intended for publication. They were issued under the title *General Gordon in Central Africa, 1874-1878.* The collection was edited by Dr Birkbeck Hill, who wrote of Gordon in these terms: *"Rarely . . . has so great a hero told his story in words so great."*

Actually, Gordon referred to himself as a pillager, as Annie Besant showed.

Dr. Hill referred to all manner of classic writings in order to parallel the alleged self-effacing heroism of Gordon.

Dr Butler, the Dean of Gloucester, preaching in the Chapel Royal, St James', used similar words of high-flown eulogy. Dr Butler describes Gordon as

"A man who had for years trodden with unfaltering feet what that high-toned book [the 'Imitation of Christ'] describes as 'the King's high-way of the Holy Cross'."

Butler concluded this ridiculous sermon by asking the congregation to give thanks

for this illustrious spectacle of heroic and saintly sacrifice.
Let his great example stand
Colossal, seen of every land
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure.

"Curious indeed is it," commented Annie Besant, "to read such words and then to read his own view of his work."

She quoted from the fourth edition of Gordon's letter:

"Some philanthropic people write to me about 'noble work', 'poor blacks', etc.

"I have, I think, stopped their writing by acknowledging ourselves to be a pillaging horde of brigands, and proposing to them to leave their comfortable homes, and come out to their favourite 'poor blacks'! or to give up their wine and devote the proceeds to send-

ing out real *missions . . . 'We do not want your beads; we do not want your cloth'; of the poor Moogies rings in my ears. 'We want you to go away.'*

"They know well enough the little benefits that would ever accrue from our occupation." (p. 143.)

Gordon repeats this phrase again and again in his letters as expressing the attitude of "the poor blacks". He adds:

"I declare, in spite of the expressions you may note in my letters, I truly sympathise with them."

Gordon denounced the Khedive soldiers, whom he commanded.

"I can quite enter into these poor people's misery at their impotence . . . Their poor minds never conceived such a trial as this before. Rain was their only care before, now civilisation *(?) is to begin with them; they are to be brought into the family of nations."* (p. 120.)

"How cordially glad I shall be when the whole relations between us cease!" (p. 139.)

Gordon hated the native soldiers whom he commanded, technically in the interest of the Khedive, actually in the interest of British Imperialism. He hated the Arabs and Sudanese. He added:

"It is degrading to call these leaders and these men officers and soldiers—I wish they had one neck and someone would squeeze it! When not obliged, I keep as far as I can from them, out of earshot of their voices." (p. 77.)

"I cannot say I shall ever take a great interest in the black tribes. They are to me all alike; whether one has a bunch of leaves or a scrap of calico does not make much difference to my mind; they are all black, they shave their heads, and they look all alike, male and female." (p.47.)

Commented Anne Besant:

Rather a contrast, this expression by Gordon of his own view about his work, to that of Dr. Butler! The preacher sees him "ministering" "to misery and want"; he sees himself as the chief of "a set of pillagers", rendering miserable savages who were happy before he invaded their land. His own account of these tribes was:

"They would seem to get on well without any regular laws, and to live out their span in comparative quiet. . . . No country presents such a field to a philosopher as this country does, with its dense population quite innocent of the least civilisation. I should say that they are singularly free from vice; their wars are generally very harmless affairs, and seldom cause bloodshed." (pp. 99, 100.)

"The people are quite quiet and inoffensive, and a man of some intellect would soon gain an immense influence over them." (p. 82.)

If Gordon took such a view of his work, it may fairly be asked, why did he do it? His reasons were simple enough, but certainly not heroic. He bargained for £2,000 a year pay, and says at the outset:

"I took the opportunity of asking him [Shereef Pasha] to express to the Khedive my ideas of giving up the affair if it did not pay." (p. 1.)

He states that if he be dismissed he will not care much, as the work is hard and the gain not large:

"At the end of two years, say £2,000; at the end of three, say £3,500 at the outside." (p. 93.)

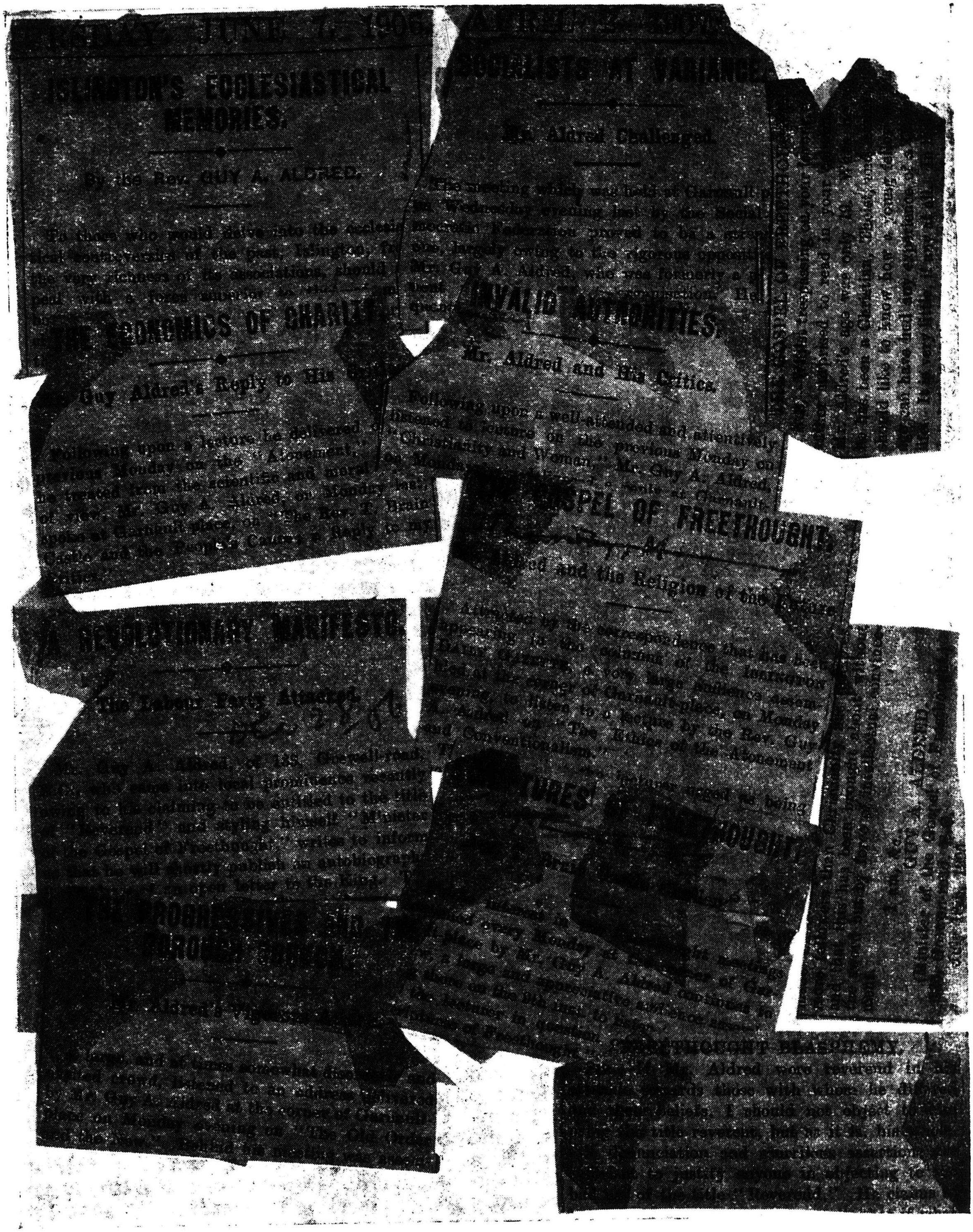
Then again he liked the freedom of the wild life:

"I felt too independent to serve, with my views, at Malta or in the corps, and perhaps I felt I had in me something that, if God willed, might benefit these lands, for he has given me great energy and health and some little common sense." (p. 59.)

"I am quite independent of the Khedive for money, and have heaps of stores of all sorts, ammunition, etc. In fact, I am semi-independent. In a year he has had £48,000 from the province, and I have spent £20,000 at the outside, and have £60,000 worth of ivory here." (p. 117.)

He thought that on the whole his own rule was better than that of an Egyptian pasha. . . .

A saint and a hero ought scarcely to have embraced evil work because he would be less cruel in the doing it than would an unredeemed ruffian, but then Gordon did not pretend to be either the one or the other. He took a very common-sense view of the situation.



Typical "Islington Gazette" headings, 1906, defining opposition roused by Author's Atheistic and Socialist propaganda at that time.

8. GORDON AND THE SLAVE TRADE

Men who are ever ready to make themselves subservient to despotism on an extended scale are always ready to display a local despotism within their own bounds of rule.

—RICHARD CARLILE

Attacking "the ludicrous misrepresentations of" Gordon's work "by press and preachers" Annie Besant proceeded to examine the "instructions" he took from the Khedive and what was the nature of his work.

She continues:

It seems from the *"Abstract of the Khedive's Final Instructions to Colonel Gordon"* (pp. xxxi-xxxiii) that the province to which Gordon was sent had never really belonged to Egypt at all. Factories were established there by "lawless adventurers", who traded in slaves and ivory. The Egyptian Government "took the factories into their own hands, paying the owners an indemnification"; but some of the men were allowed to carry on trade "under a promise that they would not deal in slaves", and they were "placed under the control of the Governor of the Sudan". As this Governor had no means of controlling his new subjects, they went on in their own way.

Anne Besant describes how the Khedive resolved to form them into a separate government and declared that *"a mere difference of colour does not turn men into wares and that life and liberty are sacred things"*.

Actually, the Khedive feared the growth of a rival power.

Annie Besant (still quoting Gordon's letters) says:

Colonel Gordon wrote "how anxious, how terribly anxious, the Khedive is to put down the slave-trade, which threatens his supremacy" (p. xl.), and Colonel Gordon's work was, as we shall see, not to put down slavery, but to destroy the power of the slave-hunters who were acquiring wealth in a country which the Khedive desired to annex to his own dominions. The action was a purely aggressive one on the part of Egypt, prompted by the desire to monopolise the lucrative Nile trade in ivory and cattle, and we shall see that Gordon served his employer well.

Colonel Gordon began his work as soon as he reached Khartoum:

"I have issued a stinging degree, declaring the Government monopoly of the ivory trade, and prohibiting the import of arms and powder, the levying of armed bands by private people, and the entry of any one without passports—in fact I have put the district under martial law, i.e., the will of the General" (p.6).

This "will" was somewhat imperious and unjust at times, by his own confession:

"I am quite well, but my temper is very, very short, and it is a bad time for those who come across me the wrong way" (p. 41).

He met a lad with a gang of slaves.

"I asked the lad in charge of the gang to whom they belonged. As he hesitated, I gave him a cut across the face with my whip, which was cruel and cowardly; but I was enraged to see the poor women and children so utterly forlorn, and could not help it" (p. 288).

One instance may serve as an example of his rough and ready "justice" (?), and may show the kind of work he did.

There was a sheikh named Bedden, and *"as he occupied a tract of land too near me to be comfortable, [!] and as he lately attacked a sheikh who had always been very friendly"* (p. 69), Gordon after some hesitation resolved to make a raid on his cattle. The cattle at night are shut up in seribas (enclosures) with only one entrance, and if this entrance is seized the cattle are secured. Gordon started off with friendly natives, attracted by the prospect of plunder, and *"we got the cows.*

"We rewarded, with what was not our own, the 'friendlys', and came back. . . . We got altogether 2,600 head" (p. 72).

On the next day *"we got 500 cows"* (p. 73), and *"I hope Bedden and Lococo will both submit before many days are over.*

"I do most cordially hate this work; but the question is, what are you to do? (p. 73).

The sequel of the story is interesting; Gordon discovered *"I had unwittingly carried off the cows of a friendly chief when I made my raid on Bedden"* (p. 76), so he restored

those, and a little later he met Bedden and found him to be a poor old man, partially blind (p. 78). He then *"gave him twenty of the stolen cows, a coil of copper and a pair of scissors . . . These twenty cows are nothing to give for me, for we took 2,000, and I have everything to gain by such conduct"* (p. 79).

Not very heroic work, this, yet this was Gordon's work, done by him for years, although he continually protests that he dislikes it.

Gordon raised his revenue by "taxation", i.e., by raiding for cattle, selecting for this purpose the tribes who did not welcome his invasion.

"The taxgatherers are out, and there is an immense amount of excitement among the natives on the other side. . . . The results of the expedition are not great—200 cows and 1,500 sheep. The natives did not know of the expedition and were taken by surprise" (p. 119).

"Another tribe close here to the south shows hostility—they are to be taxed tonight. . . . The party have come back with no cows, but with a heap of things used by the natives. . . . How I hate this country and all the work" (pp. 123, 124, 125).

Mere looting expeditions were these, bare, indefensible robbery.

"Yesterday we moved on the Moogie tribe, but it was a failure as regards the capture of cows. . . Made another attack on the Moogie, and took 1,500 cows" (p. 147).

Such extracts might be multiplied indefinitely.

Cow-lifting, however, was not the only means by which Gordon raised his revenue; he made large captures of ivory, seizing all that he found in the hands of traders, for he had "decreed the monopoly of ivory and commerce" for the State, and he confiscated all the ivory he found. To use his own description of his position: *"I am quite independent, raise my own revenue and administer it, and send the residue to Cairo"* (p. 118).

The traders who brought down slaves generally brought with them cows and ivory; these Gordon seized, and generally stripped the dealers, flogged them, and turned them loose. Thus we read: *"Everyone took from them what they liked, till they were despoiled. They were then beaten and dismissed"* (pp. 341, 342).

"I gave the captured slave-dealer a good flogging, and let him go" (p. 365). *"We have captured a great deal of ivory"* (p. 358), he writes in narrating his stoppage of several slave-raiders' caravans.

"I heard from my German that there were slaves on board, so I sent him to see, and he found stowed away in the wood some 105 of them; so I confiscated them and the ivory. . . The ivory confiscated is worth £2,000" (pp. 36, 37).

"I shall confiscate the 2,000 cows, for I cannot give them back to the far-away tribes from whom they were stolen" (p. 19).

Gordon's attitude towards slavery has been so grossly misrepresented in this country, that it is necessary to define clearly his course of action, and to prove by his own words how far he was out of sympathy with those who urge our Government to persevere in their invasion of the Soudan with the view of putting down slavery. It will be convenient to take separately his actions during his first stay in Central Africa, as Governor of the Equatorial Provinces from 1873-1876, and his policy from 1877-1879, as active Governor-General of the Soudan. (He retained the office for some time after he left Africa.)

1873-1876.—So far from disapproving the buying and selling of slaves, Colonel Gordon himself shared in such practices.

"One of the men brought me over his two children, twelve and nine years old, because he could not keep them, and sold them to me for a small basketful of dhoora. I gave one of them to ——, and the other to a German" (p. 17).

"I have bought another lad today, sold by his brother for a small basket of dhoora" (p.20).

As to family affection and the sufferings caused by separation in buying and selling slaves, Colonel Gordon treated these with contempt.

"The father", he writes, alluding to his above-named purchase of two children, *"did not even take leave of them; and though he has been over since, has never noticed them or spoken to them"* (p. 17). . . .

When Colonel Gordon came under the influence of English feeling he wrote in very different fashion. In a letter to *The Times*, March 23, 1881, he writes:

"I appeal to my countrymen who have wives and families, and who can realise to some degree the bitterness of parting with them—to God—what it must be for those poor black peoples to have their happy households rent asunder for an effete, alien set, like the pashas of Egypt and Turkey" (p.346, note).

1877-1879.—As Governor-General of the Soudan, Gordon tried hard to put down slave-raiding, but bought slaves for his army, and when he captured a slave-gang he distr buted the slaves as he best could.

"A party of seven slave-dealers with twenty-three slaves were captured and brought to me. . . . The men and boys were put in the ranks; the women were told off to be wives (!) of the soldiers" (p. 345). (The note of exclamation is Gordon's.)

"I gave the captured slave-dealer a good flogging and let him go, and gave the six slaves to a tribe near the spot" (p. 365).

He defended his action by necessity:

"The 25,000 black troops I have here are either captured slaves or bought slaves. How are we to recruit if the slave trade ceases? (p. 351).

He protests hotly against the injustice of blaming him because he allows slavery: *"Would you shoot them all?* [slave-dealers] *Have they no rights? Are they not to be considered? Had the planters no rights? Did not our Government once allow slave trading? Do you know that cargoes of slaves came into Bristol Harbour in the time of our fathers? . . . Now understand me. If it suits me I will buy slaves. I will let captured slaves go down to Egypt and not molest them, and I will do what I like, and what God in his mercy may direct me to do about domestic slaves; but I will break the neck of slave-raids even if it costs me my life. I will buy slaves for my army; for this purpose I will make soldiers against their will to enable me to prevent raids. I will do this in the light of day and defy your resolutions and your actions"* (pp. 279, 280).

Egypt had entered into a treaty to liberate her slaves in 1884 and those in her dependencies in 1889, but Colonel Gordon did not look on the matter as hopeful.

"When you have got the ink which has soaked into blotting-paper out of it, then slavery will cease in these lands" (p. 285).

"The people are bent on slave traffic. . . I declare I see no human way to stop it" (p. 289).

Any judgment of Gordon's character which left out of sight his religion would be a very imperfect one. He had a curious strain of mysticism in him, and was by no means an orthodox Christian.

He carried out his belief in God's directing influence to the fullest extent, and when in doubt was wont to decide his own actions by tossing, evidently not agreeing with Thomas Gataker, who in 1619 in his book on *The Nature and Use of Lots,* said that to expect God's interference "by an immediate and extraordinarie worke is no more lawfull here than elsewhere, yea, is indeed mere superstition".

"I am quite well, and think things promise, with God's help, to work out all right. Tossing up about difficult questions relieves me of much anxiety. Two servants who were useless were brought in, and the question whether they went on or not decided by a toss in their presence. It went for them once; however, afterwards they were sent away—they exasperated me dreadfully" (p. 6).

The last *naïve* confession is delightful. God decided that the servants should go, so Gordon took them, but—a touch of shrewdness tempering the superstition—he sent them away again when his view of their usefulness did not coincide with the divine. Be sure he did not toss when his mind was made up. . . .

* * *

Summarising Gordon's own account of his activities, Annie Besant wrote:

"Such is Gordon's character as limned by himself. As the glamour-mist which enwraps him dissolves away, his figure, now magnified to the heroic, will be seen in its true human proportions. He will be recognised as soldier of fortune, honest and loyal to his employers, instead of as the ideal warrior-saint of modern Christianity."

I have detailed rather than summarised Annie Besant's exposure of General Gordon because I considered the study of this work a critical stage in the evolution of my career. It made me untiring in my opposition to imperialism and capitalist politics. Unlike Annie Besant, I never deviated. The Gordon background is essential to studying the rise of Kitchener, the South African War, and the two World Wars. One is brought through the years down to the present time and this critical perod of 1957. The why of my development as an Anti-parliamentarian and an Anti-militarist is made clear. I feel this Gordon exposure to be a chapter in my education. Annie Besant helped me more wisely than she knew or intended.

CONTENTS

PART VII. THE ATHEIST CAMP
—Concluded

9. John M. Robertson
page 241

10. Gerald Massey
page 244

11. Moncure Conway
page 245

12. Christian Evidence
page 247

13. A. J. Waldron
page 250

14. Tories, Blatchford and Atheism
page 254

PART VIII. THE SOCIALIST GOOD BOYS

1. S.P.G.B. Correspondence
page 257

2. Typical Good Boys
page 260

APPENDICES

1. "Islington Gazette" Letters
page 263

2. Islington in Glasgow
page 263

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Anarchist Missionary (The Author)
page 253

A. Anderson, J. Fitzgerald, A. Kohn
page 261

PART VII. THE ATHEIST CAMP—*Concluded*

9. JOHN M. ROBERTSON

He who cannot do, teaches.
—ANON.

1907 was a year of very great importance to me in my mental and moral evolution. It was a year of action and decision. I intensified my Freethinking but I penetrated the charlatanism of official Freethought. I learned how to expose and to explain the myths of those who reduced all Christianity to a myth in their own economic interests. So eventful was this year that I find it hard to record its doings soberly. I swept from Atheism into Anarchism. I allied my propaganda with romance and thus added to my experiences of life. Consequently it is difficult to divide the record of this year's happenings into tame and orderly sections. Yet this is the most useful form of approach.

I have not mentioned my study of Richard Carlile and my respect for his memory. During 1905 to 1907, I collected and read thoroughly the contemporary editions of Carlile's writings. I also read all I could about Robert Taylor. As my biography of Carlile, and my studies of him in *The Word* and other publications prove, Carlile has been a great inspiration in my life. To me he is an immortal. The Freethinkers who came after him were all too mortal.

Robert Taylor's case against Christianity was not moral but scholastic. He loved to make a theatrical display of his scholarship, which was very real, yet wanting in depth. Taylor developed the solar myth theory and found great fun in describing the twelve apostles as the twelve signs of the Zodiac. He certainly displayed much learning and he made a cunning and amusing use of his vast knowledge. He had wit and humour as well as learning. Yet, to me, he was superficial. After much thought, I rejected his sun-myth explanation of the rise and development of Christianity as being false and shallow. His explanation omitted the important question of economics in relation to time of origin. I reached the conclusion that orthodox Christianity *did* embody earlier sun worship and that the priests of the Church had done some plagiarism from paganism. Christianity *only* embodied sun worship of other days. It was *not* sun worship and it did not arise as sun worship. Pagan Christs did *not* explain and did *not* destroy the historicity of Jesus. I repudiated, therefore, the myth theory of Christian origins. In 1907 this brought me into great conflict with my fellow Freethinkers.

The great champion of the myth, much eulogised by Freethinkers at that time, and regarded as a scholar to the day of his death, was John M. Robertson. I deemed Robertson a humbug and regarded his scholarship as so much learned stuff and nonsense. My Freethought friends rejoiced in his debunking of Christian theology and his classification of Jesus as a Sun myth. They objected when I applied a sceptic iconoclasm to their champion. Priests of all kinds, lawyers, professional labourists, and pseudo-scholars have hated me with a glorious hatred all my days.

John M. Robertson died on January 5, 1933, whilst Annie Besant passed away on September 26 of the same year. She left Freethought to become for forty years of her life the High Priest of a vain superstition. Robertson arrayed himself in the classical robes of a bogus scholarship.

Forgetting her association with Bradlaugh from 1874 to 1889, Annie Besant, during 1907, was at the top of her form as an "authority" on religion in the opinion of the Christian Evidence Society. She was quoted and requoted up and down the country wherever this strange organisation of evidence for the impossible sent out its apologists for Trinitarian orthodoxy.

At one of her London meetings, Annie Besant repudiated her former Atheism, not in clear terms, but by implication. She stated that when a Christian became an Atheist he lost the power of prayer. Naturally. This

strange platitude became the stock-in-trade of Mr W. T. Lee, who was regarded as a great Christian Evidence champion.

At Cardiff, Mr Lee secured a full newspaper report for this absurd statement and his no less absurd comment.

"God exists" averred Mr Lee in effect "only for those who pray to him". He did not see that this comment made God not merely the creation, but the illusion of man's mind. He did not realise the cynical import of Annie Besant's remark. Her retiral from reason was devastating, not to reason, but to religion. Annie Besant was an Atheist before she gave up the habit of prayer. It was natural for her to give up the habit since she knew of no God to whom to pray.

What a strange concept of God Mr. Lee possessed! The moment we cease speaking to him, God, said Mr Lee, decamps and leaves us to our doom. He goes into a pique, pouts, and slips out of existence. The universe is left without a creator but continues to exist. Annie Besant, not meaning to be so, became more Atheistic than ever. And Mr Lee rejoiced in her declaration.

John M. Robertson was associated closely with Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh. After Bradlaugh's death, Robertson became editor of the *National Reformer* until this paper stopped publication in 1892. He then started the *Free Review,* which closed down in 1895. It is strange how, in the Freethought and also the Socialist movements, I was contemporary with persons who lacked staying power. They commenced as propagandists and concluded their careers as appetites on two legs, inspired by a wolfish love of status and position under capitalism. This explains Annie Besant, the high priestess of mysticism. It explains John M. Robertson, the solar myth scholar and safe Liberal politician.

In 1895, Robertson stood as Independent Radical candidate for Northampton. The Bradlaugh tradition did not help him and so he abandoned independence. In 1906, he became Liberal M.P. for the Tyneside division of Northumberland and remained Member for that constituency till 1918. He became a member of the Privy Council in 1915, and was Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade 1917-18. He wrote a splendid essay against militarism but upheld conscription. The man was without character and lacked integrity. Many of my Socialist and Freethought friends considered him to be a scholar. I despised his scholarship because I hold that a man lacking in integrity must be devoid of all true scholastic impulse. A true scholar cannot deny truth either in his words or by his actions. Robertson, darling of the Freethinkers, was no scholar.

In 1907, Annie Besant pandered to Christian orthodoxy with her esoteric Christianity and alleged theosophic wisdom. J. M. Robertson pandered to the same orthodoxy as a politician despite his parade of mythological explanation. Deemed by his admirers to be a scholar, he secularised his scholarship to worthless expositions of sophistry and platitude. There was no robustness in his Atheism. Secularists defended his want of moral principle and virtually explained that, as a politician, he had to live. As with Voltaire to the Abbe, I did not see the necessity.

In *The Freethinker,* G. W. Foote "regretted the political necessities"—what a criticism—of J. M. Robertson's position that "compelled him to throw Secular Education into the background. At the Huddersfield by-election he worked for the orthodox Liberal candidate, who was in favour of religious education in the state schools, and against the Labour candidate, who was in favour of Secular Education".

Robertson did the same thing at Jarrow. He supported S. L. Hughes, the official Liberal candidate, who accepted the Nonconformist ticket of "simple Bible teaching"—and opposed the Labour candidate, Pete Curran, whose programme included Secular Education.

At this time, Robertson claimed that he was a Socialist as well as a Secularist.

Robertson's conduct increased my opposition to parliamentarism. It was clear that Freethinkers like Socialists had nothing to hope for from Freethinkers who entered the House of Commons. John Morley, John Burns, and John Robertson all established that truth. "Honest John" was a parliamentary joke in 1907. It has been ever since.

In November 1907, J. M. Robertson spoke at Keighley, in the Municipal Hall, under the auspices of the Liberal Association. His lecture was entitled "Liberalism and Socialism". A discussion followed the lecture and a local Freethinker named H. C. Shackleton asked Robertson to give his reason for his action during the Jarrow election. The following is a copy of the written question which Shackleton sent up:

"Is it true that Mr Robertson at the Jarrow election worked on behalf of the Free Church

candidate and Simple Bible Teaching whilst there was in the field a man pledged to the Secular Solution? If so, how can he justify such action with his Freethought?"

Robertson gave no reply. Shackleton, therefore, waited outside the ante-room for Robertson. When Robertson put in an appearance Shackleton politely asked him his reason for not replying to the written question. The reason he gave was evasive. He said: "I think I was justified when seventeen of the Labour members voted against the Secular Solution."

The *Northern Echo* stated that Robertson delivered a lecture in aid of the Primitive Methodist Church funds at Gosforth.

Robertson explained his conduct. In his election campaign, the Primitive Methodists at Gosforth were kind enough to place their school at his disposal. A short time afterwards they asked him to give them a lecture, which he did. It did not make any difference to him whether they raised anything or not on behalf of the Church fund.

I hold no brief for Pete Curran, who died in February 1910, at the age of fifty. Curran was an Irishman, born in Glasgow. He was an ordinary worker and worked for some years in the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich. Although a Labourist, he was a man of no Socialist principle. He was also a Catholic. Yet he stood for Secular Education where Robertson supported Bible teaching in the schools. In this matter I had more respect for Curran, in his ignorance, than for Robertson, in his alleged scholarship. His mythical explanation of Christianity did not destroy Christian superstition or the power of the Church. His conduct destroyed integrity. I rejected J. M. Robertson and his mythical explanation. I asserted the humanity of Jesus, the Son of Man, against monarchy and the belief in God. I preferred the wonderful chapter of the Apostle Paul, the 13th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, as being more useful to humanity than all the alleged scholarship of J. M. Robertson. I preferred the alleged Sermon on the Mount of Jesus, well knowing that it must be a collection of some of the wise and challenging utterances of Jesus brought together for remembrance, to dramatic concepts of solar myths. I despised and rejected J. M. Robertson as a man without depth, purpose, or worth. Actually, I knew that in a sound historical sense, I was a Christian emancipated from theology, and an Atheist emancipated from mythical anxieties.

On the subject of Atheism, J. M. Robertson indulged in the some philosophical evasion as Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant (in her Atheist days), G.W. Foote, and others.

Robertson stated:

"Ill-informed, and even some well-informed people, commonly describe an Atheist as one who says, 'There is no God.' . . . Between logical Pantheism and Atheism, it cannot be too strongly affirmed, there is no difference save in name. . . . The only consistent course is to use the privative 'a' and stand to the term [Atheist] which means 'without Theos', without God-idea."

As I have stated in a previous chapter, this rank evasion of meaning by over-scrupulous definition was repugnant to my mind when I became an Atheist. I stressed my repugnance in all my lectures during 1907. It remains repugnant to this day. By Atheism, I mean *not* only that I have *no* concept of God. I mean that *all* concept of God is impossible. I mean that there is *no* God. And with Bakunin I hold that if God did exist, it would be necessary to deny and to abolish him. I believe in the humanity of Jesus. I think that there was grandeur in the character of the man Jesus. I believe no less certainly in the abolition of deity. The teaching of Jesus, despite his poetry of utterance, was practical earthly idealism. The power of his message arose from the fact that faith in humanity and not in deity was the path to individual and social emancipation.

It has been said that a God-abandoned world is the scene of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies. A God-abandoned world is a world of Atheism. The Roman Empire was a world of Atheism. Out of its Atheism arose the religion of Jesus, challenging the Atheism of wealth and power with the Atheism of poverty and revolution. Christianity arose as a new expression of revolution and not a pedantry of the sky.

Strangely enough, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, who passed from the Congregational ministry to the Church of England, was flirting at the City Temple, London, with the New Theology in 1907.

Whilst Robertson, the Rationalist, supported the Bible-teaching candidate, Campbell supported Pete Curran, the Secular Education candidate.

Campbell wrote a letter warmly supporting the candidature of Pete Curran. The *Christian World* called Campbell's "intervention" *unfortunate,* and sneered at it, at the same

time, as "unlikely to be very helpful to the Labour party". The *Christian World* supported Hughes, the Liberal candidate. There was no politics in that, of course. It was Campbell who was guilty of "politics". In other words, he failed to support the Nonconformist candidate—who, by the way, *lost*.

Mention of Campbell brings me to Fenner Brockway and the *Christian Commonwealth*. The paths of Brockway and myself have crossed more than once but there has not been any close association. Brockway typified careerism, the young man anxious for a job. His associations have been hypocritical and none of his associates had any real humanitarian or social purpose. None of them lasted the distance. In this biography I shall come to grips with each one in turn.

Actually I commenced my Anti-Parliamentary activity in my home at the back and cellar of a shop in Goswell Road. Brockway, under the influence of R. J. Campbell, took a shop in Goswell Road in November 1907. Here the intellectuals came together—G. D. H. Cole, H. Slessor (afterwards Sir Henry Slessor and a Judge), Clifford Sharp, etc. At this time, and presumably ever since, Brockway considered that charlatan, George Bernard Shaw, a great man and a mighty exponent of Socialism. Not one of these persons was worthy of a moment's respect.

There in 1907, was expressed and defined the struggle, between careerist place-hunting —the Brockway shop—and revolutionary struggle. My poverty-stricken activity at 133 Goswell Road received expression at the time in the organisation of the Communist Propaganda Group and the Bakunin Press. The press was the bankrupt press which I bought for ten shillings and trundled from Soho on a hand-cart. Of that more later.

The press was a bargain and the beginning of a great adventure that has lasted for fifty years. But what a trundle!

10. GERALD MASSEY

Education is the bread of the soul.
—MAZZINI

Gerald Massey avoided some but, in my opinion, not all of the superstition of Annie Besant. His Spiritualism was far superior to Annie Besant's Theosophy in one respect. He played with ideas of incarnation but he never permitted himself the arrogant and ridiculous charlatanism to which Annie Besant resorted in her attempt to assert some greatness of personality. As a reincarnationist, Annie Besant squandered her worth as a thinker and simply masqueraded. Gerald Massey insisted on Freethinking. Somehow he blended the mysticism of Annie Besant with the solar mythology of J. M. Robertson. I read his writings with difficulty and some amazement.

Massey was a poet and ethnologist. He died on Monday, October 28, 1907. His passing caused me to re-study what he had written on the mythical nature of Christianity. His learned enquiries into Christian origins were ignored by the ordinary press. A. E. Fletcher, then regarded as an outstanding journalist, contributed a long account of Massey's life to the columns of the *Daily Chronicle*. He made no reference to the fact that Massey lectured widely on such challenging subjects as *The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ* and *Why Don't God Kill the Devil?*

The newspapers made the most of his Spiritualism and emphasised his belief in a future life. By now he will know how erroneous he was in that belief. It is so proper to believe in a future life. And this fantastic belief and hope reduced his genius to the level of the average journalist's mediocrity. The more outstanding a man's repute is as a journalist under this system the greater must be his mediocrity. Annie Besant and Gerald Massey made contact with the crowd when they asserted their future-life belief. Every pettifogging money-grubber likes to believe that his wonderful individuality will survive the grave and be preserved for ever. To say "I believe in the world to come" rouses the sympathy of suburbia—and of the tenements also.

Despite this future life nonsense, Gerald Massey was a Freethinker and a poet. He was not a great poet but he had the music of poetry in his soul. Landor paid him generous

tribute. In his maturity, Massey turned aside from poetry and devoted himself to a scholarly and philosophic exposure of the Christian theology. And thus Massey registered himself as a pronounced, an ardent, and a zealous Freethinker.

When G. W. Foote was imprisoned in Holloway Gaol, in 1882, for alleged blasphemy, Massey was on a visit to England from America. He sought an interview with Foote but was refused churlishly by the Home Office. He sent Foote his two magnificent volumes a year later, when they were published, *The Natural Genesis,* which Foote prized to the day of his death. Massey wrote to Dr. Aveling, then editing *The Freethinker,* a note, saying, with reference to Foote: *"I fight the same battle as himself, although with a somewhat different weapon."*

Among the quotations on the back of the title-page of *The Natural Genesis,* Massey included one from "The Devil's Chaplain":

"Bind it about thy neck, and write it upon the tablet of thy heart, 'Everything of Christianity is of Egyptian origin'."—REV. ROBERT TAYLOR, Oakham Gaol, 1829.

Here is a typical passage from the close of Massey's "Explanatory" Preface:

"The writer has not only shown that the current theology is, *but also* how *it has been, falsely founded on a misinterpretation of mythology by unconsciously inheriting the leavings of primitive or archaic man and ignorantly mistaking these for divine revelations. The work culminates in tracing the transformation of astronomical mythology into the system of Equinoctial Christology called Christianity, and demonstrating the non-historic nature of the canonical gospels by means of the original mythos in which the Messianic mystery, the Virgin motherhood, the incarnation and birth, the miraculous life and character, the crucifixion and resurrection, of the Saviour Son who was the Word of all Ages, were altogether allegorical."*

Massey's scholarship made a clean sweep of the New Testament history, viewed as a divinely inspired work. Like Taylor and like Robertson, Massey did *not* understand how Christianity rose out of the social and economic conditions at the time that it did. Here he went right off the rails because of his learning, and despite his Christian Soc alism, which ought to have protected him from such error. He did put traditional and ecclesiastical, as distinct from historical Christianity into a sweating bath of Egyptian mythology, in which it was utterly dissolved. The newspaper obituaries of Gerald Massey were silent in this direction. I noted the falsehcod and rejoiced in the greatness of the man. I felt the need to re-read his writings and grasp whatever truth they contained.

11. MONCURE CONWAY

Justice cannot be maintained except by a man who is both strong and wise.

—CICERO

Within a month of the passing of Gerald Massey, Moncure Conway joined him in the shades. Conway was a quite different type of Freethinker from Gerald Massey. Born in Virginia in March 1832, he died in New York on November 16, 1907.

Conway was first a Methodist minister in 1850. He took the usual divinity course at Cambridge, Mass., and became a Unitarian minister in Washington and later in Cincinnati. He was the son of a Judge who owned slaves. Conway set the slaves free and stood firmly against slavery in the American Civil War. He lectured all over the North freely and vigorously against slavery. At the end of the Civil War he came to London and became minister of South Place Chapel. This he turned into an Ethical Society.

Conway discarded prayer and all superstition and ceremony. He remained minister at South Place till 1897. His weekly lectures were printed and then collected in book form. Although I did not know him personally I knew of him quite well. I read and re-read his sermons and was influenced greatly by them.

There was nothing pedantic or obscure about Conway's style. Sometimes I think his utterances had the appearance of platitude.

He accepted the fact that Christian theology embodied some solar mythology which it had inherited from Paganism. His own scholastic approach was very much from the archeological side. He was an Egyptologist but never wearied his congregation with the heavy mystical references in which Gerald Massey engaged. He had a kind of practical moralism.

Conway never made any public profession of being an Atheist. This reluctance amused me. He never concealed the fact that he was an Atheist. He had not a scrap of belief in any supernatural power. He was opposed to all ideas of a future life. He regarded Atheism as the natural philosophy of every real thinker.

He was not afraid of associating with Atheists or with those who called themselves Atheists. Since Foote defined his Atheism with the same strange evasive precision as was employed by Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, and J. M. Robertson, I doubt whether he is worthy of being remembered as an Atheist. Allowing that he was an Atheist despite his Careful Willy definition, there is no doubt that Conway was willing to stand by the side of the Atheist.

When Foote was imprisoned in 1883, under the Blasphemy Acts, Conway made his case the subject of one of his *Lessons of the Day* at South Place Chapel. He poured contempt on the Government allegation that the *Freethinker* cartoons were indecent.

A few weeks after Foote's release from Holloway Gaol, in 1884, a crowded meeting was held at St. James Hall, to demand the repeal of the Blasphemy Acts. Conway was one of the speakers.

One of Conway's points was received with marked approval. He said that some of Foote's critics complained that he went a little too far in his war against Christianity. Perhaps, Christianity was not so black a thing as Foote had painted it. Christians themselves, averred Conway, had taken the trouble to prove that the critics were wrong and that Foote was right. By imprisoning Foote they had proved that all that he said against Christianity was true.

Conway's great work was done as the editor and biographer of Thomas Paine. His six volumes of the life and work of Thomas Paine established Paine as a classic. It was a noble consequence of the great work of Richard Carlile who popularised and preserved the memory of Paine by active discipleship. Conway was the research disciple. He was not without the power of action but he was not the robust field propagandist and disciple that Carlile was. He was no missionary of the highways and by-ways. As regards Paine, Conway was the scholarly commentator and textual authority. His work was a great work well done. He vindicated Paine for all time.

Conway was placid and prosaic in some ways. He was economically contented, well-placed for money, and possessed a fine library and pictures. He did not know the struggle of poverty. In his *Autobiography* he quoted with delight the Gnostic legend that it was the Devil who *"first named the name of God"*. He considered that lurking deterioration represented by "progress" justified the Gnostic legend of a *"devil-invented deity"*.

Conway concludes his book by stating that "he would gladly go over" his pilgrimage again, *"were it only for the forty years of happy wedlock"*.

There is a smug complacency in this statement that I do not admire.

Although this indicates the man in one aspect of his life, there was another side of greater struggle that did appeal to me. With his death, I became a close student of his writings. I must say that this study developed my knowledge and I hope my wisdom from 1907 onwards. It caused me to enquire into the story of South Place. I found the record to be a remarkable revelation of heresy. I have told it fully elsewhere and must reproduce it in book form. South Place is one of the inspirations of thought and freedom in London. Conway's *Autobiography* also inspired me to struggle against slavery and oppression.

Not his death, but the living consequences to me of the inspiration I received from a study and an attempt to understand his life and thought constituted one of the events that made 1907 a year of importance to my development.

12. CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE

Orthodox unbelief and unbelieving orthodoxy.
—MONCURE CONWAY

From 1904 to 1909, I spent a considerable portion of my time in Hyde Park, especially on Sundays and Bank Holidays. When I first went there I was living at 133 Goswell Road, Clerkenwell, which deserves to be remembered as a very poverty-stricken yet really great centre of revolutionary activity and development. In January 1908 I moved to Shepherds Bush, where I lived first at 102 Thorpebank Road. At that time it was the end of the built-up area and from the window one looked across big fields to Acton. It was very much like living in the country yet with close access to the town. From there Rose Witcop and myself were compelled by economic conditions to "do a moonlight", but we only went a little nearer the Shepherds Bush Tube station, to 35 Stanlake Road. From here my so-called Indian Sedition activity was conducted. After my imprisonment I went to live at 64 Minford Gardens, Shepherds Bush, which was on the opposite side of Uxbridge Road, parallel to it, and leading into Shepherds Bush Road. Here, the landlady developed a dislike to me and we moved to 17 Richmond Gardens. My activity as an agitator connected these places. Each became in turn the centre of an unbroken line of propaganda. The record will be retailed later. The story represents the light side of propaganda. Much of it is important.

After 1909, I broke with Hyde Park as a regular participator in its discussions. In later years, after I had established myself as a Glaswegian, I did engage in two Free Speech fights in Hyde Park. One I sought myself. The other was imposed on me by the police authorities. My regular consistent association with Hyde Park however, ended in 1909. In 1910 to 1919, it was casual. Mostly I had transferred my attention to Hammersmith and Ealing, but I visited Highbury Corner again sometimes.

It was my custom, during the period that I was almost an inhabitant of Hyde Park, to go into the Park for several hours on Saturday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Sunday, unless I was speaking elsewhere, meant almost a complete day in the Park.

I had made the acquaintance of Christian Evidence lecturers in Clerkenwell and Islington, in 1904, before I associated with them, or antagonised them in Hyde Park. Only, in Clerkenwell, they attacked me. In Hyde Park, I did the attacking and I did it most vigorously. I also came into conflict with them in Brockwell Park, Regents Park, and Finsbury Park. During 1907, the Christian Evidence Society was at its peak as a reactionary propaganda association. After that, its influence declined. From 1904 to 1907 it was attaining to its height. Decline was inevitable because it had nothing to offer except blackguardism. It was an organisation without soul, without ideals, and without worth.

I was a keen admirer of Richard Carlile, whom the Freethinkers neglected, and Robert Taylor, the so-called Devil's Chaplain, in 1907. It often amazed me, when I was arguing with the Christian Evidence champions, to recall that the first Christian Evidence Society was established by Robert Taylor in London, on November 24, 1824.

In the name of that organisation, Robert Taylor advanced four propositions which were certainly staggering issues for the apologists of the 1907 society to face. Robert Taylor, in the name of the C.E.S., challenged inquiry into the following points:

1. That the Scriptures of the New Testament were not written by the persons whose names they bear.
2. That they did not appear in the times to which they refer.
3. That the persons of whom they treat never existed.
4. That the events which they relate never happened.

Taylor advanced quite learned "proofs" in support of these propositions. I certainly do not give unqualified support to these propositions, which anticipated the views and arguments of J. M. Robertson, Foote, and others. I think that they contain grave errors of thinking. But they were more reasonable than the unqualified superstition of the Christian Evidence Society of 1907, which was a reactionary Church of England organisation.

In Hyde Park, during this formative period of my life, I met many characters who influenced me. Some of them will be mentioned in

this autobiography. The great feature of my Hyde Park activity was that I came into direct and untiring conflict with the Christian Evidence Society and developed a considerable contempt for the vulgar quality of this Society's dastardly propaganda. Its teaching was devoid of all spirituality. It was totally without reason or ethics.

My first experience of the actual propaganda of the Christian Evidence Society in Hyde Park was made on Sunday, December 13, 1904. I then witnessed a typical example of the treatment which the Christians meted out to the Secularists in the discussion forum at Hyde Park—a treatment which was repeated constantly in my presence. Even in 1904 it seemed to have been but a repetition of similar treatment of mature expression.

As I was up there from about 4.30 to 8.30 p.m., I arrived in time to note that the fair-argument, free-speech-loving chairman, a somewhat old, and much bewhiskered gentleman by name of Allen, refused to allow any opposition at all.

At the evening meeting, Mr McInnes, a fairly representative type of the orthodox buffoon, occupied the platform, and dealt with a book of Dumas. He touched largely, in the course of his remarks, upon the relative moral value of Christianity and Secularism. As I made notes, with the intention of offering opposition, I am able to give the gist of his lecture. Here it is:

"Christianity had given us hospitals, orphanages, and asylums. What had Atheists given us? Nothing but our prostitutes, drunkards and swindlers. Look at the "great" National Secular Society! They had opened near a lunatic asylum, torn the Bible to pieces, got drunk on whisky, and removed to Newgate. He was speaking the truth; and before he left the Park that evening, he intended to defy the shoals of Atheists who surrounded the platform to do their worst. Atheists did not like to hear the truth, and therefore he suggested that they had better go and release their brothers at the Zoo, the monkeys. As for Charles Bradlaugh, he was not worthy so much as to unloose the shoe latchet of the Quaker, Fox. And, where was Bradlaugh's monument? (Shouts—"At Northampton".) He stood corrected. So Bradlaugh did have a monument! Well, he was pleased that one had been erected to his memory. Although sufficient money had been raised to erect many more monuments, it was gratifying to know that all had not been dropped—in beer, prostitution, and whisky."

Fox may have had his faults. The idea of this type of apologist pretending to have something in common with Fox the Quaker was nauseating.

Upon the conclusion of this admirable piece of humour, which had lasted for exactly one hour, Mr Allen, the chairman, mounted the rostrum (which had been subscribed to by the public generally), asked for questions, and announced that no opposition would be allowed.

Messrs Green, Bailey & Co., the general lecturers for the society, which included a clean-shaved parson, owning the sobriquet of Browne, besides themselves, now arrived. The Secularists therefore, said brotherly-feeling Allen, would have to take their tonic from Mr Green for thirty minutes.

The Secularists naturally raised their voices very powerfully and very rightly, against such lack of fair play, fear of honest discussion, and pious bigotry. Accordingly, Brother Bray, another Christian, went for two policemen. Secularists, unless they wished to face arrest, fine, and imprisonment, were forced to submit silently to this public insulting and dragging of their characters through the mire.

The worthy Green proceeded to administer his tonic. Here is a sample, as offered without one bit of proof:

"Atheism was unmanly, cowardly, brutish, immoral, beery, and not respectable; it was a barrier to scientific, intellectual and moral progress. From the asylum, the Secularists had gone to Newgate. So far as he could see, they were still not far removed from their ancestors, the monkeys."

Nor was this the most scandalous of the treatment meted out to the Secularists in the public forum by these Evidence quacks. Having removed with some other Freethinkers, while Green was speaking, to some distance from the meeting, I was surprised to find Mr Bray advancing towards us and stopping dead within a few yards of where we were standing. The object was obvious; it was to invite banter. And while some was being indulged in, we observed the two policemen approaching, ready to "run us in" should we make a slip. Such was the freedom of speech enjoyed in the public forum in the year of grace 1904.

From 1905 to 1907, Freethought propaganda

in Hyde Park was conducted mostly by the British Secular Society. Meeting announcements of this organisation appeared in the *Agnostic Journal*. As all my *Agnostic Journals* were seized by the authorities, I cannot reproduce the names of the speakers and subjects meantime. Ernest Pack, who had a humorous style but spoke very distinct Freethought, was the chief speaker. Another speaker was Frederick Howard. He was a born orator and a powerful propagandist. He became a Socialist and in disgust with Labourism, became an Anti-Parliamentarian. Despairing of the struggle, he became a speaker for the Anti-Socialist Union and was actually their most telling propagandist. When I knew him in 1907, he was a total abstainer. As an Anti-Socialist, he was not happy within himself, although he enjoyed himself making merry at the expense of the Labour politicians. He never compromised his Atheism. I met Howard often, even after I lived in Scotland. He became somewhat coarse but I retained my liking for him and regretted his associations. He was killed in a blitz during the Second World War.

In September 1907, Ernest Pack produced a curious twopenny pamphlet, reporting a Christian Evidence lecture. The idea occurred to him of hiring a shorthand reporter to take down the address of a very polite and accomplished Christian Evidence lecturer, called Edward Baker. This report gave the gentleman's speech as near as stenography could get to a phonograph; it reproduced grammar, pronunciation—and manners. This intensely interesting document was headed *God's Protectors* and was on sale at Pack's meetings in Finsbury Park. It is valuable evidence of what Christian Evidence lecturers were like at the beginning of the twentieth century. Baker was immortalised.

One great argument of the Christian Evidence Society in 1907 was to accuse the Secularists of having composed, printed, and circulated widely, a so-called *"Whisky Hymn"*. The propaganda activity of the lecturers of this society made this hymn famous. At the time, Edith Vance was general secretary of the National Secular Society. She tried to bring the Christian Evidence Society to book. She asked the C.E.S. secretary to look into the matter. After much delay and evasion, he upheld the lecturers of his organisation and declared that it was published in a *Secularist Manual of Songs and Ceremonies* issued by Austin Holyoake and Charles Watts in 1871. The hymn was entitled *Let Us All Be Unhappy on Sunday* and only four lines of it were quoted. The Christian Evidence lecturers argued that these lines showed that Secularists advised people to sit at home and get drunk on Sundays.

Actually, the verses were not written nor published by the Secularists. They were published first in the columns of the highly respectable and orthodox *Blackwood's Magazine*. Later, they were included (pp. 120-122) in a volume published by William Blackwood and Sons, in 1879, entitled *Songs and Verses, Social and Scientific,* by an Old Contributor to *Maga*—the author of them being really Lord Neaves. Charles Neaves (Lord), lived 1800-76. He was a famous Scottish Judge and a gifted song writer.

This volume was a collection of pieces that had been printed and circulated long before, and were brought together "in the hopes of preserving or reviving in the minds of those who were then pleased to approve of them a recollection of the feelings that attended their first reception".

The "Whisky Hymn" read as follows:

LET US ALL BE UNHAPPY ON SUNDAY

A LYRIC FOR SATURDAY NIGHT

Air—*We bipeds made up of frail clay.*

We zealots, made up of stiff clay,
The sour-looking children of sorrow,
While not over-jolly today,
Resolve to be wretched tomorrow.
We can't for a certainty tell
What mirth may molest us on Monday;
But, at least, to begin the week well,
Let us all be unhappy on Sunday.

That day, the calm season of rest,
Shall come to us freezing and frigid;
A gloom all our thoughts shall invest,
Such as Calvin would call over-rigid.
With sermons from morning to night,
We'll strive to be decent and dreary:
To preachers a praise and delight,
Who ne'er think that sermons can weary.

All tradesmen cry up their own wares;
In this they agree well together:
The Mason by stone and lime swears;
The Tanner is always for leather.
The Smith still for iron would go;
The Schoolmaster stands up for teaching;

And the Parson would have you to know,
There's nothing on earth like his preaching.

The face of kind Nature is fair;
But our system obscures its effulgence:
How sweet is a breath of fresh air!
But our rules don't allow the indulgence.
These gardens, their walks and green bowers,
Might be free to the poor man for one day;
But no, the glad plants and gay flowers
Mustn't bloom or smell sweetly on Sunday.

What though a good precept we strain
Till hateful and hurtful we make it!
What though, in thus pulling the rein,
We may draw it so tight as to break it!
Abroad we forbid folks to roam,
For fear they get social or frisky;
But of course they can sit still at home,
And get dismally drunk upon whisky.

Then, though we can't certainly tell
How mirth may molest us on Monday;
At least, to begin the week well,
Let us all be unhappy on Sunday.

Clearly this hymn was a satire on pious humbug and dreary Sabbatarians. The Christian Evidence apologists took two lines from it and said that Freethinkers preached getting *"dismally drunk upon whisky"*! Even if the hymn had urged this peculiar form of conduct, it was not composed nor published by Freethinkers. The assertion was a lie from start to finish.

13. A. J. WALDRON

Ignorance is not innocence but sin.
—ROBERT BROWNING

Conflict with the Rev. A. J. Waldron was an inevitable consequence of being a member of the Freethought Group in London in 1907. During that year in Brockwell Park, where he flourished in a kind of way, that "reverend" gentleman without reverence made great play with the whisky hymn. He did so before Freethinkers had explained the story of the hymn. He continued to do so afterwards. And he never apologised. The hymn, as I have shown, was *not* written to promote Atheism. It was *not* written to glorify whisky. It was simply a satire on the unco guid. The author was a Christian, possessed of literary ability, and rejoicing, like Robert Burns, in a neat turn of phrase. Waldron and his Christian Evidence colleagues, slandered the author, a distinguished Scottish Judge: and they slandered Atheists. This libellous activity they advanced as a high form of Christian polemics. Some of the church-going public rejoiced in this nefarious type of apology. To my mind, it argued orthodox unbelief.

There is not the least doubt that the Rev. A. J. Waldron owed his status in the Church to the absurd but almost kindly indignation of Freethinkers. He was smart enough to see that by slandering Freethinkers he would advance his career. His mode of propaganda, if it could be called propaganda, was almost an appeal for their help. They joyfully responded.

"Gentlemen," he said to them in effect, "bend your backs and behold I will be carried by you into a snug little vicarage. You shall be my asses and gratitude I will express none." And Freethinkers, in their generous folly, did what was required of them.

Thus it came about that in the second week of September 1907, the then popular weekly *M.A.P.*, represented Waldron as a "magnificent preacher", a man of "immense originality", and the "most effective speaker the Church of England possesses".

This was news indeed to a good many Churchmen.

The account went on to describe Waldron as "the most powerful and accomplished foe unbelievers have"!

Waldron, the reader was told, had been the victor of "many a hard-fought and sometimes even a bloody field"—for "when he tackles a blasphemer he hits hard" and "a free fight has more than once followed upon his fiery denunciation of a foul-mouthed blackguard". He has "had to use his fists—and he can use them". Actually the only two unbelievers I ever heard of Waldron attacking were elderly men. One was selling *The Freethinker* in the street. On that occasion Waldron was sup-

ported by several clergymen and "a howling mob" of his own followers.

A similar expression of licensed hooliganism took place during 1907 in Brockwell Park when F. Schaller, a member of the National Secular Society executive, and a very elderly man who revealed his years in his carriage and his voice, was manoeuvred by Waldron and his supporters into commenting on the Book of Leviticus. This must have been on Sunday, September 29, 1906. Schaller was either chairman or a second speaker. The speaker for that afternoon (3.15 p.m.) was J. Ramsay, then a prominent figure on Freethought and Social Democratic platforms.

Schaller was a timid but sincere speaker. It must have been his very timidity that led him into reciting passages from the Book of Leviticus. Waldron challenged him to do so and asserted that Leviticus was inspired by God. Even as a Boy Preacher I could not see what God could have to do with the Book of Leviticus. It was described as a kind of medical book of the time. No sane person would quote it as an argument in defence of God's inspiration. No sane person would be persuaded to read it in public. Waldron was a knave, insane with a mean ambition. Schaller was a fool, insane from fear of being dubbed publicly a coward. He was like the man who did not have the courage to wear a white feather in war-time. I rejoiced in my "white feathers"! But Schaller dreaded the white feathers.

Waldron challenged him to deny the divine inspiration of the Bible. By a trick he persuaded Schaller to discuss the Book of *Leviticus*. He then invited Schaller to express his opinion of the 12th Chapter. Here was a moral code, etc.

It may indeed be that, here and there, some suggestion of some kind of moral code finds expression in *Leviticus*. To my mind, this work of twenty-seven chapters, is a most unhealthy piece of writing. There can be little ethics in the various forms of disgraceful and vicarious sacrifices it enacts for different sins. The relation of the alleged sin in each case is an excuse for prescribing a bloody and disgusting ritual. The book is full of sin and retribution by means of sacrifice. I have heard the work defended as a primitive medical manual. I must confess I have never seen much medicine in its chapters. Even if it were so, one hardly expects God to write a medical treatise. The real concept of God is mystical and poetical. It relates to prophecy and social change. *Leviticus* is without poetry and often devoid of sense. Its atmosphere is one of uncleanness. The most notorious chapter in the book is probably the 12th chapter, dealing with the uncleanness of woman after childbirth, and the double uncleanness that follows having a female child. Sheer male impertinence and outrage of thought.

Replying to Waldron's challenge, Schaller stupidly and docilely read publicly from the platform the 12th chapter. Waldron thus created uproar. Schaller was accused of obscenity. The very substantial platform of the Camberwell N.S.S. was rushed. Schaller was knocked off the platform and as he moved away from the crowd of hooligans as fast as his legs could carry him, an old lady belaboured him with an umbrella, which she broke in the interest of the Lord and in his alleged copyright in Leviticus. Waldron, to the applause of his hooligan associates, stated that no more Freethought meetings would be held in Brockwell Park. This could *not* be tolerated. I was asked if I would speak in the Park the following Sunday and I agreed to do so. I had the measure of Waldron and intended to stop his little game. I turned up at the Park the following Sunday, October 6, at the usual time. Actually I spoke afternoon and evening. I was not afraid of Waldron's alleged pugilistic prowess. I was not a frail elderly man and I had no respect for his "immense originality".

The local Freethinkers did not share my complete contempt for Waldron. His methods scared them a little. The *Freethinker* for October 6, 1907, published the following appeal to London Secularists:

South London "saints" are earnestly requested to go to Brockwell Park this afternoon (Oct. 6) and stand by the Camberwell N.S.S. Branch's platform. Embittered by the progress made by the Branch during the summer, the satellites of the local vicar offered hooligan opposition last Sunday; jeering, pushing, and singing hymns to drown the Freethought speaker's voice. Finally they made an ugly rush, some five hundred strong, towards the platform, but were driven back. As they threaten to come again, the Secular "saints" know what to do.

I always held good meetings in Brockwell Park. They were well attended and the questions and discussion were interesting. The meetings were lively without being rowdy. I was not the speaker on September 22 and

29. Each of these Sundays the meetings were intolerable. I was asked to be the speaker on September 1. Foote did not dare to mention that fact in the *Freethinker*. It would have been too fair. Such was the nature of the man.

Waldron's account of himself, faithfully repeated by his friends, revealed some discrepancies. It was said that he was educated at Oxford University, although his speech suggested Billingsgate Fish Market. He claimed that he *"early came under the influence of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant"*. He avowed that, *"at one time there was probably no greater sceptic in England"* than the said A. J. Waldron. He *"could find no real happiness in scepticism"*. Hence he *"made one of his first appearances as a public speaker as the opponent of Bradlaugh"*.

It was impossible to find any trace of any such meeting or any such opposition. Nor were details of time and place ever supplied.

The first authentic *date* in Waldron's career was 1899, that is eight clear years after Bradlaugh's death. Waldron was ordained deacon then by Dr. Talbot. What he was doing before his ordination he never said. He did his best to avoid all discussion of his Christian activity before he joined the Church of England. He discouraged all enquiry as to what he was doing in the Lord's vineyard prior to 1899. It was a secret and one felt there was something there which he felt was not greatly to his credit.

I am not a pugilist. I have never believed in fisticuffs. On the other hand I have never been afraid of mobs or governments. I am not brave nor aggressive. For some reason, I cannot be a coward. I have never felt afraid of consequences. I was often unpopular at school but I feared neither teachers nor fellow-scholars. I resisted in civil prison and in military detention and was never scared. Actually, I am a mild person. Only I do not scare.

When I arrived at Brockwell Park on Sunday, October 6, 1906, the meeting ground was blocked. Also the entire path up to the platform. The crowd had a threatening attitude. I marched straight up the path from the park gates to the platform, and looked neither to right nor to left. I had only two comrades with me. We took our stand by the side of the very big and beautifully constructed Camberwell Branch N.S.S. platform.

Waldron had a rival platform, also very big. He said that I would not be allowed to speak. Obviously, this attitude was an outrage, since I had *not* been at the meeting the previous Sunday and no one knew what I was going to say. The N.S.S. chairman was not too willing to mount the platform. He did so and was shouted down. I took his place. His undignified descent amused me. Waldron was perched on the Christian Evidence platform no distance away supported by a hooligan crowd of pious pretenders. I do not say that they were Christians. They claimed to be Christians, true defenders of the faith once delivered to the saints. Certainly, they were no saints.

I started to speak. Waldron led the crowd to say that I would not speak. My voice was strong. I said that I had a civil right to be heard and that I would speak. If anyone endeavoured to stop me speaking they were guilty of moral and legal offences and no advertisement for their creed. I challenged Waldron to get order so that I might explain the position.

Whether he was daunted by my attitude—for I had no intention of leaving the platform—or whether he deemed it unwise to oppose my mere appearance before I had spoken a word, I cannot say. He paused and his hesitation demoralised his hooligan supporters. I got speaking.

I said that I was there to speak on a certain subject that had no relation to the previous week's happenings. I would deal with my subject. At the end I would take questions. After questions I would deal with the incident that had caused all the furore.

There were some slight signs of dissent but I had won. The crowd listened attentively. I got a few questions.

I turned to the Schaller business. I said that the *Book of Leviticus* ought *not* to be read in public because it left a nasty taste in the mouth. One felt a certain uncleanness. That very fact was an argument against the suggestion that God had inspired it; or, as some Christians believed, alleged, or pretended, that he had written it. From every angle an absurd suggestion. Schaller had read it in public only because Waldron and his supporters had dared him to do it. Schaller was very foolish to accept the challenge. The offence was committed not by Schaller but by Waldron. He was the man who should be indicted.

I had to consider what to do, and I had decided. Schaller had been challenged to read the 12th chapter and had been assaulted because he did so. I proposed, despite my objection to the passages, to read it. If I were interrupted I would read it until I was heard

in silence. The incident would be closed.

I started to read it and the mob, led by Waldron, created an uproar and threatened to rush the platform. Some brandished umbrellas. I commenced a second time. Considerable interruption ensued but less than before. I said that I would start again and that I hoped that this time I would get perfect silence.

I read the passage again. I got silence. And as I closed the Bible I stepped down the steps of the platform, facing the crowd as I did so. I then turned and with two supporters, walked towards the park gates. The huge crowd divided up naturally each side and formed a guard of honour through which we walked. There was perfect silence. The bus came up and as we swung on to it, the crowd broke and some stones were thrown. That was the end of Waldron's attempt to stop Secularist meetings in Brockwell Park.

This failure followed on Waldron's silly story about the conversion of "the distinguished Atheist", James Carl, who disappeared to Bristol. As stated already, he admitted that he had never been an Atheist. Anyway, he got into some trouble, and faded out entirely.

In the end, Waldron himself somehow faded out, after falling into some kind of conventional disgrace. Conflict with the gentlemen was part and parcel of the struggle towards reason and service to human well-being as a fighter for Freethought.

Prior to the Schaller meeting, Waldron and his gang had made many personal attacks on me which no longer matter. His accusations were without foundation and they never stuck. The smearing was unsuccessful. I was young and I resented them. Naturally, I complained to *The Freethinker*. The result of my complaint was the following ungracious reply in *The Freethinker* for July 21, 1907:

TO CORRESPONDENTS

GUY A. ALDRED—*We do not fill* THE FREETHINKER *with Christian "charges" against ourselves and our colleagues. Why should we give space to their "charges" against you?*

This statement was *not* true. No one was more anxious to defend himself against Christian "charges" than G. W. Foote. My meetings in Brockwell Park were always



THE ANARCHIST MISSIONARY

Portrait of the author taken in Liverpool, August 28, 1907, when he entered on his first Anarchist campaign outside of London. Compare this picture with the most respectable Boy Preacer portrait on page 27 (No. 2).

orderly. Trouble was caused only when Schaller, a member of the N.S.S. Executive, was the speaker. I was then called upon to repair the damage he caused. Surely I deserved a little consideration from the Society that looked to me to be its champion in stormy weather.

Schaller was a most unfortunate person on the platform. A few years later he spoke at a meeting in Hyde Park. A very pious Christian young woman went behind the platform and stuck a hat-pin in his leg. A wicked and dangerous thing to do. In the middle of a sentence, he stopped and exclaimed: "Oh Christ!" The woman did it again, and once more Schaller exclaimed "Oh Christ!" Nothing was done to the woman but Schaller was arrested and fined £5 for "blasphemous and obscene language"! To my mind, the language was neither blasphemous nor obscene. The police knew what had happened and made no effort to arrest the woman. The magistrate brushed the explanation to one side. Altogether, a disgraceful affair.

[*Author's Note.* Owing to my bad writing, and bad proof-reading, in some previous chapters the "r" is omitted from the name of the Rev. A. J. Waldron.]

14. TORIES, BLATCHFORD AND ATHEISM

I am an "Infidel", and I now ask leave to tell you why.

—ROBERT BLATCHFORD

I have referred to the most unsatisfactory and evasive definitions of Atheism advanced by Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant (when an Atheist propagandist), G. W. Foote, Chapman Cohen, and others. I would add to the list the names of Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spencer, Robert Ingersoll, J. M. Robertson. Not one of these Atheists or Agnostics—and some of them sneered at Agnosticism as being merely respectable Atheism—attempted a bold and fearless definition of Atheism.

I have applauded Robert Blatchford for challengingly describing himself as an *"Infidel"* in capital letters in *The Clarion* and in the opening sentences of *God and My Neighbour*, when he published that famous work in November 1903. I further stated that, although Blatchford became an avowed Spiritualist twenty years later, he never recanted his Atheism. This description of Blatchford's attitude is both true and false. Actually, Blatchford's attitude was not quite so staunch as I have implied. His Atheist position was no better than that assumed by Bradlaugh and Annie Besant. He did not repudiate the name but he qualified the substance. In effect, he debased the currency as most Secularists tend to do.

At the Kirkdale election, in November 1907, it was assumed that Mr Hill, the Labour candidate, would win the election on a straight issue against the Unionist. Mr Hill was a deacon of a local Nonconformist chapel and he had thrown out the Labour Party item of Secular Education in favour of "Simple Bible teaching" as it was termed. Mr Hill lost the election and Ramsay MacDonald and Bruce Glasier explained that he was defeated by religious bigotry. In reality, he was beaten by Tory knavery and the stupid outlook of the working class. There is a case for boycotting the ballot box. There is *no* case for voting Tory.

The Tories raised the cry of "Atheism". They circulated leaflets containing plain denials of Christian theological doctrines by Robert Blatchford. They declared that *The Clarion* was *the* organ of Socialism, not just a paper discussing and advancing Socialism and Freethought also. They said that Robert Blatchford, the editor of *The Clarion*, advocated Atheism. They asked the electors to conclude from this fact that Socialism and Atheism were identical. Consequently, Mr Hill, the chapel deacon, was the candidate of Atheism. This is a somewhat fantastic and long drawn-out form of deductive logic. It could be true. It would be more true to say that Mr Hill was *not* even a Socialist candidate. Whether every Socialist must be an Atheist is a matter for discussion and enquiry.

Blatchford seems to have accepted the suggestion that he was the villain of the piece. He did not flinch from being deemed "the bold bad man". He declared that religion was the enemy of human progress and that he would continue to attack it. That was his reply to the self-styled Christian Socialists, who held that they ought to be free to advocate Socialism and Christianity but that Blatchford had no right to advocate Socialism and Atheism. In my view, Blatchford had a right to say what he thought. Personally, I held, and have held ever since, that Socialism involved Atheism, and that Atheism involved Socialism. They are natural allies. Atheism functions on the intellectual and moral plane. Socialism functions on the economic and political plane. They express the same concept of reason and justice.

Arising out of the Kirkdale election, some pressure was brought to bear on Robert Blatchford. The *Daily Express* declared that Socialism was "Atheism". This policy advertised Atheism. By showing how Atheistic some Socialists were, that journal, then edited by Blumenfeld, proved that Atheism was no longer negligible as a social and political force.

The *Daily Chronicle* devoted an article to "Socialism and Religion", and wound up by declaring two things: first, that Blatchford "carried more weight among British Socialists than anybody else"; second, that Socialism, having little chance under any circumstances in England, had no chance at all *"when its champions encumber themselves with an anti-Christian propaganda"*. This will not be

true for ever. Even the false dawn of parliamentary Socialism has shown that a real dawn is breaking.

Ramsay MacDonald met this criticism by pointing out very carefully that Socialism had no sympathy with Atheism. This was plain falsehood. MacDonald also said that Socialism really owed a great deal to Christianity. As MacDonald defined Christianity, this also was untrue: for MacDonald was pandering to the Church which believed in miracles, the Holy Trinity, the Resurrection, and the rest of the theological nonsense. Blatchford was moved to join in this absurd retreat dictated by political panic and a desire for a place in the sun under capitalism. To do him justice, his retreat was not complete, and it had its curious aspects.

In November 1907, Blatchford repeated that Christianity must be opposed. Socialists who styled themselves Christians must be converted. But he repudiated the Atheist, defining Atheism as all the Secularists refused to define the term. In my view, at this stage, he defined Atheism clearly and correctly.

Of the Atheist, thus defined, Blatchford said: "I have no connection with him." He proceeded to explain that he had a religion of his own.

Writing in the very *Clarion* in which he had proclaimed his *"Infidelity"* so boldly five years before, Blatchford wrote:

When you condemn with such severity the "atheism" of Robert Blatchford, are you speaking from knowledge, or from prejudice and hearsay? Because Robert Blatchford is not an atheist, and does not mean what you think he means.

Subsequently the following appeared in answer to a correspondent:

HAROLD ELLIOT—*An atheist, according to common dictionary definition, is a disbeliever in the existence of God". "Nunquam" does not disbelieve. He simply does not know or understand.*

Unlike the Secularists who objected to this definition, I agree with it.

Bradlaugh and Ingersoll were both known as Atheists. The Atheism of Bradlaugh was evasive, despite what his admirers say. So was the Atheism of Ingersoll. At one time, Blatchford accepted their definition of Atheism. He wrote:

Ingersoll, the Atheist, is a nobler moralist and a better man than Moses.

The following excerpt is from an "Interview" headed "My Belief" in the fifth volume of the Dresden Edition of Ingersoll's collected works:

Question—Don't you think that the belief of the Agnostic is more satisfactory to the believer than that of the Atheist?

Answer—There is no difference. The Agnostic is an Atheist. The Atheist is an Agnostic. The Agnostic says: "I do not know, but I do not believe there is any God." The Atheist says the same. The orthodox Christian says he knows there is a God; but we know that he does not know. He simply believes. He cannot know. The Atheist cannot know that God does not exist.

Ingersoll called himself an Agnostic, but he did not deny that he was an Atheist. Blatchford calls himself an Agnostic, but denied that he was an Atheist in 1907, reversing his previous language. He defined Atheism quite differently from them.

In that same "Interview" Ingersoll said:

I do not believe in any Supreme personality or in any Supreme Being who made the universe and governs nature. I do not say there is no such Being—all I say is that I do not believe that such a Being exists.

Which was exactly Blatchford's 1907 position.

Bradlaugh stated his Atheistic position in terms of Agnostic evasiveness already quoted.

Commenting on Bradlaugh's view, and supporting it, G. W. Foote wrote in 1888:

There be Gods many and Lords many; which of the long theological list is to be selected as the *God? A God, like everything else from the heights to the depths, can be known only by his attributes; and what the Atheist does is not to argue against the existence of* any *God, which would be sheer lunacy, but to take the attributes affirmed by Theism as composing its Deity, and to inquire whether they are compatible with each other and with the facts of life. Finding that they are not, the Atheist simply sets Theism aside as not proven, and goes on his way without further afflicting himself with such abstruse questions.*

This is not a real Atheist's position.

Here are extracts from *God and My Neighbour* (1902):

I claim that this Heavenly Father is a myth. . . . There is no Heavenly Father watching tenderly over us, His children. He is the baseless shadow of a wistful human dream.

You have been told that I deny God and a future life. I deny nothing. I know nothing about God, nor about a future life.

Blatchford ought to have denied. Blatchford, in his evasive or carefully precise definition, did not differ from Bradlaugh and Ingersoll one iota.

Towards the end of his long life George Jacob Holyoake repudiated the word "Atheist". "To disbelieve," he said, "is to deny."

Holyoake adopted this attitude in order to please the respectable. Bradlaugh and Ingersoll had the same idea. So did Blatchford. Only the political motive and not just the respectable motive moved him.

All Atheists seem to have adopted the same attitude. Apart from those already mentioned, I refer to the following persons:

J. McCABE—"Generally speaking, however, it will promote a better understanding if we bear in mind that those who call themselves Atheists reject positively only the ordinary Christian conception of God, or else take the word to imply only an absence of proof of the existence of any form of Divinity."

J. T. LLOYD—"Etymologically an Atheist is a person who is without God, not a formal denier of God. . . . Some prefer to be known as Agnostics, but the difference between the two words is one of sound, not of meaning. To be without knowledge of God is precisely the same thing as to be without God."

Professor Romanes defines Agnosticism as a state of mind which abstains "from either affirming or denying the existence of God." He asserts that it is "a suspended judgment, and all that it undertakes to affirm is, that upon existing evidence, the being of God is unknown.

Secularists officially claimed, in 1907, that this was their position as Atheists. Blatchford fell back to this position by asserting that he was not an Atheist. All it meant was that Atheists there may be, but an Anti-theist there could not possibly be.

This is the reason why I insisted at all my Freethought meetings, and Socialist ones too, throughout this year 1907, that being an Atheist I was an Anti-theist and, for that matter, a netheist. It afforded me immense pleasure to stand alone in the Freethought movement for this viewpoint.

PART VIII. THE SOCIALIST GOOD BOYS

1. S.P.G.B. CORRESPONDENCE

To support a party above your class is to sacrifice substance to shadow.

—ANON.

The references in previous chapters to the Socialist Party of Great Britain—to which is usually added the phrase, "and Tottenham" —bring me to the S.P.G.B. correspondence of 1906. As late as 1939, it was stated in Hyde Park, London, and later at Albion Street, Glasgow, that I once attempted to join the S.P.G.B. Subsequently this statement was withdrawn by the editorial board of the *Socialist Standard,* in a mean kind of way. Even had the statement been true the assertion was without point. It is not an argument against one's position in 1940, or thereabouts, to say that he attempted to join the S.P.G.B. in 1906. Since 1906 scores of people have passed through the ranks of this small sectarian body, always dogmatic during their five-minute membership. They denounce all who do not belong to the party and then fall back into some Labour-Faking organisation or join the Tory party. Without humour or commonsense, each new defender of the abstract Marxist dogma during fifty years has repeated the parrot slogan: "Guy Aldred attempted to join the S.P.G.B."

It both defines my evolution, and answers this absurd substitute for criticism, to reproduce from the columns of the *Socialist Standard* for November 1906 (vol. 3, No. 27), pp. 22 to 23, the actual correspondence as published by that journal:

"TEMPORISING AND REACTIONARY"

A PROMINENT S.D.F. MEMBER'S CRITICISM OF S.D.F. METHODS

133 Goswell Road, E.C.
August 31, 1906

To the Editor, *The Socialist Standard*

Dear Comrade—Could you please find room in your forthcoming issue of the *Standard* for the following letter of resignation of my membership of the S.D.F., addressed to Comrade F. B. Buckeridge, of the Southampton Branch, S.D.F.? I have cancelled all my lecture engagements with the S.D.F. branches.

Yours fraternally,
GUY A. ALDRED

P.S.—I should be obliged to be supplied with a membership form of the S.P.G.B.

(Copy)

133 Goswell Road, E.C.
August 31, 1906

To Comrade F. B. Buckeridge
32 St Andrew's Road, Southampton

Dear Comrade—I have delayed writing to you before, with regard to your request that I should lecture for you on September 9th next, because I wanted to give you an answer in the affirmative. I have, however, after a careful study of the position, come to the conclusion that the S.D.F., mistaking numbers for efficiency and popularity for sound economics, is not a workers' party. I regret, therefore, that I can no longer speak from the S.D.F. platform; and shall at once resign my membership, and as soon as possible settle my dues to my branch, thus leaving the party in an honourable manner, I shall apply to the Socialist Party of Great Britain for membership.

Yours fraternally,
GUY A. ALDRED

133 Goswell Road, E.C.
September 2, 1906

To the Editor, *Socialist Standard*

Dear Comrade—After having been, during my membership of the S.D.F., one of the most vigorous opponents of the Party of which the *Standard* is the organ, and having opposed that Party's Principles in a debate with Comrade Fitzgerald, I feel I owe an explanation

to your readers for having accepted its principles, even though I may not be allowed to join its ranks. As a matter of fact, however, my acceptance of the revolutionary principles for the inculcation of which your organisation alone among Socialist organisations avowedly stands, represents the maturity of those ideas that first led me to join the S.D.F., and subsequently, in disgust, to throw up Parliamentary correspondence for *Justice*. I now see quite clearly that a revisionist policy is incompatible with a revolutionary policy, and it is because of that fact that the S.D.F. is so unsatisfactory an organisation. I have got about a good deal among its rank-and-file during my membership, and I was surprised to find two distinct sets of feeling existing among its members. On the one hand, there were the frankly revolutionary spirits, good, earnest, and sincere comrades; on the other, tame revisionists and mere social reformers. This being so, the organisation, as such, could have no policy, and hence could not be "class-conscious". Now, Comrade, in the past I have accused your Party of merely mouthing the Class War, and have stated that I could do that on the S.D.F. platform. There may be an element of truth in that, but further study has revealed to me this fact, that if I speak on the S.D.F. platform I ought to subscribe to its constitution; and if I did so subscribe, I should have to subscribe to temporising and reactionary political "tactics" such as find practical expression in the case of Mr W. Thorne, M.P. I cannot honestly do so and preach the Class War; so, although not yet a member of the S.P.G.B., I feel I can no longer honestly mount the S.D.F. platform as a supporter of S.D.F. tactics. Again, recently I initiated a correspondence in *Justice* on why Socialists could not philosophically believe in the capricious effects of prayer nor be Christians. *Justice* indulges in the old cant about "private religious belief". This betrays a desire to negate Marxian economics and philosophic Socialism in order to secure the support of "class-conscious Socialists"—save the mark!—like the Rev. Conrad Noel. No! Socialism is not to be established, the workers are not to be emancipated by the revisionist and respectable tactics of official S.D.F.ers. Only when the workers have realised the meaning of class-consciousness will they be emancipated. Meanwhile the class-controllers may be depended upon to delude by granting palliative "reforms" to soften the suffering occasioned by capitalistic and class-control of the necessities of existence.

Just now I am booked up for several engagements with comrades in the S.D.F. I admire and respect their devotion to the cause of working-class emancipation, a devotion wrongly employed in the interest of the revisionists at the head of the S.D.F. I find it hard to cut myself adrift from these colleagues; but I feel I must be true to myself.

In conclusion, therefore, Comrade, let me thank those comrades of the S.P.G.B. who have so persistently brought under my notice the logic of the revolutionary position and also the official abuses existing in the S.D.F. Whatever the future may have in store for me, I shall remember, with gratitude, the services they have rendered me. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours fraternally,
GUY A. ALDRED
(Late Parliamentary correspondent to *Justice*)

(Subsequent to the receipt of the foregoing, an article by our correspondent appeared in *Justice* which conveyed the impression that the writer had not clearly apprehended the position of the S.P.G.B. He was written on the subject by the General Secretary of the Party, and the following reply was received.)

133 Goswell Road, E.C.
September 16, 1906

To Comrade W. Gifford, Gen. Sec., S.P.G.B.

Dear Comrade—Your letter of the 14th inst. to hand. In reply, I would beg to state that the letter that appeared in *Justice* above my name was sent some days previous to the letter I addressed to the Southampton S.D.F., and a copy of which I addressed to you. At the same time as I addressed this copy to you I addressed another copy of the same letter to the editor of *Justice*, and it is this letter to which reference is made in the editorial comment. When I noticed this fact I addressed a further letter of complaint to the editor of *Justice;* but was informed by Comrade A. A. Watts, in the communication I enclose, that Quelch could not publish it. These are the facts.

Coming to my attitude at the present time. Briefly, it is this. Socialism, standing for the complete revolution of the present state of

Society, can only be realised when the proletariat are educated up to class-consciousness and are thus able to obtain their own emancipation. In the meantime, it is unnecessary for Socialists to ask for or to seek to obtain palliatives, since the directing of attention to these palliatives must inevitably divert attention away from the end at which we aim. Socialism is therefore opposed, not only to both capitalist parties, but also to the humbug of the present Labour Party—the existence of a Parliamentary Labour Party without a Socialist programme and a Socialist proletariat being more or less a farce. Furthermore, seeing that Trade-Unionism tends to perpetuate the present system and by its standing for a minimum wage, tends to play into the hands of the Capitalistic Class who need but reply by increasing the cost of the necessities of existence, Socialism must attack and denounce it as being ineffective, and tending to create an aristocracy of Labour, since the unskilled do not and cannot benefit by its workings, so long as Capitalism endures. I stand, therefore, for anti-revisionism, anti-palliationism, and clear and straightforward revolutionary Socialist propaganda; and am opposed to voting for either Liberal or Tory party *under any circumstances*. I am also opposed to the placarding of any district with bills, by a Socialist candidate for either municipal or Parliamentary office that would lead *other than class conscious electors* to vote for such a candidate. I also feel that many members of the S.D.F. do not understand economics. These facts notwithstanding, I have withdrawn my resignation, since I feel that to leave under present circumstances would be of no service to the cause. Among S.D.F.ers it would be thought that I had been "huffed" into resignation over the religious question, whilst it seems to me that the S.P.G.B. comrades would be doubtful about my sincerity. I also find that whilst the rank and file of the S.D.F. includes many tame and inane revisionists, it also includes many avowed revolutionaries. I also find that there is nothing in the constitution forbidding one to preach revolutionary, clear-cut Socialism. Rather than be misunderstood, I propose to use the S.D.F. platform for placing before members these revolutionary ideas, and where it brings me in conflict with other members to, without hesitation, oppose these members; then, if I am expelled, members and comrades will be in no doubt as to the reason of my expulsion. So far as organised representation is concerned, I will only add that, in my opinion, the S.P.G.B. embodies, in its constitution, the best organised expression of class-conscious Socialism. But, under present circumstances, although I gain nothing by so doing, I believe, in order that I may not be misunderstood, it is best for me to at present expound clear-cut and uncompromising "impossiblism" on the S.D.F. platform.

With best wishes, and giving you full permission to publish this correspondence, I remain, fraternally yours,

GUY A. ALDRED

(Enclosure)

Twentieth Century Press, Ltd.,
37a Clerkenwell Green,
London, E.C.
Sept. 10th, 1906.

Dear Comrade—H. Quelch asks me to write round to you to say he cannot publish your letter.

Regarding your later note, respecting the article on Egypt, he would be very pleased to have it if you will send it in.

Fraternally yours,

A. A. WATTS, Sec.

It is clear from this correspondence that I asked for a membership form but never attempted to fill up such form and never applied for membership. It is clear, also, that the S.P.G.B. questioned me on this very point, why I had not entered my application. Whether my reason was sound or unsound, it is no less clear from this correspondence that I retained my membership in the S.D.F., and did not pursue the S.P.G.B. association.

Despite its pedantic accuracy of statement, the S.P.G.B. is an offence in my eyes, because its propaganda is devoid of courage. Even abstract accuracy is a poor substitute for the vigour and defiance of living. The S.P.G.B. is a party of fake and pedantic politicians, a Social Democratic offshoot. In the revolutionary struggle it does not count.

2. TYPICAL GOOD BOYS

The S.P.G.B. thus shows itself consistenly Marxian. It is not, however, an important body, and its present leaders seem to be obscure individuals, who append pseudonyms to their articles in the "Socialist Standard".

—NESTA H. WEBSTER,
"The Socialist Network", 1926

I debated with Jack Fitzgerald, founder of the S.P.G.B., in Bermondsey, in 1906. In this debate I defended, not uncritically however, the S.D.F. Some local report was published of this debate. A passing reference was made to it in *Justice*. I cannot remember at this date if any note of the debate was published in the *Socialist Standard*.

At the time of this debate, Fitzgerald and other spokesmen of the S.P.G.B., were somewhat friendly to me. They expected me to become a convert to their wordy armchair revolutionary Socialism. What they did not realise is a very simple truth. All parliamentarism is reformism and opportunism. It does not permit the underworld to revolt. The parliamentary method is calculated to obstruct the operation of *true* Social Democracy.

Fundamentally, I was a Social Revolutionist. I believed in action as well as thought. To my mind, the S.P.G.B. represented neither thought nor action. They suffered from a deadly exactness, and they had no quick. They were lifeless and I could not join the dead. Once they realised my attitude they pursued me with venom and stopped at no slander and no misrepresentation. Examples of this sectarian development will be given as this story of my evolution is detailed.

In 1907 I knew three members of the party personally: A. Anderson, who did not know me intimately but attacked me bitterly; J. Fitzgerald, who knew me personally, and grew to hate me more as our personal contact declined; A. Kohn, whom I knew intimately as an acquaintance. Kohn attacked me very little. After my 1909 imprisonment for Indian sedition, Anderson made a dead set at me. My name had only to be mentioned to call forth abuse from Anderson. In time Fitzgerald excelled him.

Anderson and Fitzgerald were the two active members of the S.P.G.B. Each lasted the distance as a party member to the day of his death. Anderson was a house-painter and Fitzgerald was a bricklayer. Anderson was a good outdoor speaker but Fitzgerald was better indoors. When they attacked me they used the same terms of abuse and their speeches were identical in tone. They preferred abusing me to advancing the overthrow of capitalism. Both were members of the S.P.G.B. executive from the time of founding the party to the day of their respective deaths.

Anderson became the paid organiser of the party just before the outbreak of the First World War, 1914-18. The war put an end to this project. In 1925 Anderson developed arterio-sclerosis and died the following year. He was 47 years old at the time of his death.

Fitzerald liked taking classes in economics. He liked teaching. Here, however, I felt that he revealed his want of revolutionary purpose. He passed an examination in building construction with a view to becoming a teacher under capitalism. After a period he taught mathematics to aspirants for the Indian Civil Service. What was this but serving Imperialism? It was indefensible conduct. Finally, he was given a permanent job teaching at the Brixton School of Building. Seeking and securing jobs of this character did not seem to me consistent with Fitgerald's revolutionary pretensions. I considered him a charlatan for all practical purposes.

Fitzgerald was an assiduous cyclist. Wet or fine, he went everywhere on his bicycle.

In 1925, Fitzgerald contracted a kidney complaint. He fell ill about the same time as Anderson but got relief from an operation. The trouble returned in 1928. He underwent two operations after a cycling holiday in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland. He died a fortnight after the second operation. This was in the spring of 1929. His age was 56.

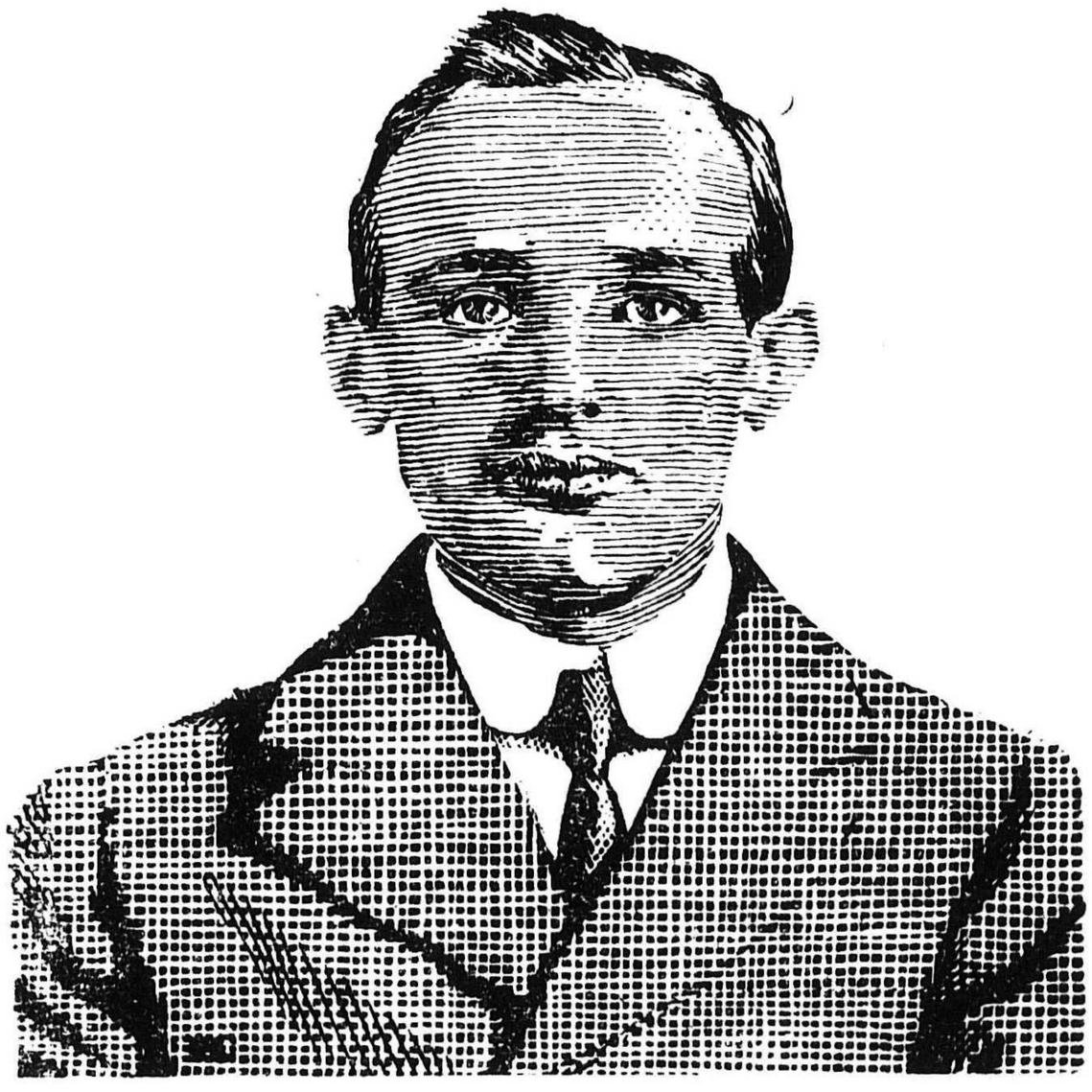
Fitzgerald and Anderson were the leaders of the party. Kohn was only a lieutenant or deputy leader. He was born in 1888 and joined the party in 1908. When I first met him in Hyde Park he was 19 years old. After joining



A. ANDERSON



J. FITZGERALD



A. KOHN

the S.P.G.B. he became active as a speaker. He wrote a little for the *Socialist Standard*. I never regarded him as an able writer or original thinker.

Soon after I met him, he started a Socialist private book agency. He brought a large number of English translations into Britain and made known widely the Kerr publications. The study of Socialist writings was his hobby and the circulation of radical literature was his livelihood. At that time, and for some years after, the Kerr publications from Chicago were famous throughout the Socialist movement in Britain. Kohn certainly created a living interest in them in Hyde Park.

Actually, I should deal with his war history in its proper place. It may be wise, however, to summarise his record at this point. He was opposed to the war but merely sought to "dodge" conscription. He had no intention of suffering for his opposition. In 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, he held two or three rowdy meetings in Hyde Park. On the last occasion, the crowd rushed his platform, and two policemen escorted him from the Marble Arch to the tube station opposite. That ended Kohn's platform protests.

When the passing of the Conscription Act became certain, Kohn managed to leave for the United States. I do not know how he was able to do this but he did. He remained in U.S.A. and Canada for six years. On his way to the United States he wrote a cowardly and despicable essay "from mid ocean", attacking those who stayed at home and resisted conscription. He denounced them for being "reformists". I believe that his criticism of them as "reformists" was right, but that did not explain their opposition to conscription. It did not lessen the value of their resistance to conscription. And it did not excuse Kohn's conduct in running away. His behaviour was cowardly and miserable in the extreme. It revealed him as a person utterly devoid of character or Socialist integrity.

In U.S.A. and Canada he seemed to have moved about quite freely. He wrote and spoke on Socialism and organised classes in economics. In 1917, he sent an article to the *Socialist Standard,* London, which the U.S.A. authorities seized in the post. The F.B.I. endeavoured to trace him and failed. They asked the Special Branch of the C.I.D. in London to help them to find him. Detectives "picked up" Fitzgerald for questioning and kept him in a cell all night at Cannon Row police station.

The S.P.G.B. called this detention of Fitzgerald "an arrest", which was not exactly correct, although the detention was legally and morally wrong. They had no charge against Fitzgerald and they had no right whatever to detain him. The police searched Fitzgerald, another outrage under the circumstances, and found a note-book. This contained the names and addresses of all the S.P.G.B. speakers and leading members, *except Kohn!*

Because of her relationship, the police arrested Kohn's sister and took her along to Scotland Yard for interrogation. The strange thing is that she was Secretary of the Party at the time. The police failed to discover that she was even a member of the Party. They were intent on viewing her as Kohn's sister.

Kohn was on the Executive Committee and the Editorial Committee of the Party since soon after he joined, till he went to U.S.A. He was a member of the Editorial Board again from 1924 to 1929.

Kohn's health broke down just before the outbreak of the Second World War. He went into hospital for treatment in 1940. The hospital was hit by a bomb. A few weeks later he was released from hospital. The room in which he had lodged was blasted.

He stayed out of hospital a couple of years. Tuberculosis developed and early in 1944 he returned to hospital.

Kohn's hospital career was one of adventure. He was twice evacuated as a result of the hospital being hit by flying bombs. Finally he found himself lodged in a temporary hospital in North Wales. Here he died on December 28, 1944. At this time he was 56 years of age.

I met, or noted the activities of, other members of the S.P.G.B. at later periods. References will be made to them in due course. The view I formed in 1907 developed with the years. The Socialist Party of Great Britain was indeed a party of good boys. Far too good and constitutional to get into trouble with authority. Far too good to count in the social struggle. Far, far too good to serve or to inaugurate the social revolution.

That is why they came to detest me. I had a flair for challenge. They never challenged. They explained learnedly, heavily, wearily. But they never revolted. They conformed.

APPENDICES

MORE ON ISLINGTON

For reasons explained I have omitted letters and reports that ought to have been included in this record. I repair these omissions only by swelling the appendices.

1. "ISLINGTON GAZETTE LETTERS

Mr Walker's letter appeared in the *Gazette* for Monday, September 10, 1906. It is abridged only because the writer repeated, word for word, certain parts mentioned in his other letters that are embodied in this work:

CHRISTIANITY V. FREETHOUGHT

Sir,—I was glad to read the letter signed "Onlooker" in your issue of Friday last, and I must say that the tone of the letter was more fair than any of Mr Aldred's or of Mr Innes', but the questions are still not answered—how is it? . . .

Whilst I occupied Mr Aldred's platform on Saturday I made the statement that our charitable institutions are subscribed to by people of all shades of thought and opinion, but that is not the point at issue. The question is still unanswered—how many have been started by, or in the name of, the Freethought party? "Onlooker" wishes us to compare the high state of civilisation of Heathen Japan and Holy Russia, but I fail to see the comparison. Heathen Japan, as he calls it, is becoming Christianised to a great extent. Her present Prime Minister is, I believe, a Christian. Togo, the "Japanese Nelson", is a Christian; several high officials in the Japanese Court and elsewhere are Christians. If we turn to Holy Russia, what is the main cause of the trouble there at the present time? That they will not allow the Bible to enter the country. Were they to do this, Christianity would help to bring about a settlement of their troubles. I am, etc.,

ALFRED P. WALKER

Liverpool Road, N. September 8, 1906

Islington Gazette, Thursday, October 2, 1906:

Sir,—I have followed this interesting controversy for a long time and have hitherto abstained from adding my humble mite. But now Mr Leonard Smith has drawn me out of my silence, I say, God bless him. If the Rev. Guy Aldred has not been "sat on" before he undoubtedly has now, and if he takes my advice he will change his views once more. I would like to see Mr Leonard Smith's letter in pamphlet form and distributed at the Rev.'s meetings. I believe it would do him a deal of good, especially the testimony of the late editor of the *National Reformer,* Joseph Barker. I am, etc.,

Ashbrook Road, Holloway E. G.

2. ISLINGTON IN GLASGOW

Although I come from Clerkenwell, much of my activity, first as a Boy Preacher, and then as a Freethinker and a Socialist, made me a fairly public figure in Islington. In view of my later activity in Glasgow, especially Central Glasgow, it is interesting to record that Mr A. M. Torrance, the former Mayor of Islington, stood as parliamentary candidate for Glasgow Central, in 1906.

The figures of the election were:

GLASGOW, CENTRAL

Electorate, 15,616

Mr. A. M. TORRANCE (L)	6720
Mr J. G. A. BAIRD (U)	6289
Majority	431

1900, BAIRD (U), UNOPPOSED. 1895, BAIRD (U), MAJORITY 2,129.

Liberal Gain

On Tuesday, January 19, 1906, Mr Torrance addressed an eve of the poll meeting at which he referred to a Tory circular.

The circular, headed "The most monstrous case of the London County Council", stated that Torrance was rejected as a Parliamentary candidate for East Islington in 1900 by 1,619 votes. This was perfectly correct. The khaki fever was raging, and the constituency was full of Jews. They faithfully supported Sir Benjamin Cohen. Five months later Torrance was returned as a member of the London

County Council by a majority of 1,980, and in 1904 they elected him for the sixth time by a majority of 2,400.

In this circular it was asserted that the London County Council had raised the rates by two million pounds. What were the facts? One of the monstrous things the late Tory Government did was to throw on the London County Council the whole burden of the work which the School Board did before. The L.C.C. had also to take over the debt of the School Board.

This commentary makes interesting reading to those who have no knowledge of School Boards and take Council Schools for granted.

"A. M." in the *Islington Gazette*, for January 22, 1906, described how the election result was received in Glasgow.

The opening sentence is of special interest:

The great undertaking of our late Mayor, Mr A. M. Torrance, J.P. to oust from his strong position in the premier constituency in Glasgow one of the Bairds, the great ironmasters, appeared at first to be a hopeless task.

Shortly after the return of Torrance as Liberal M.P. for Glasgow Central, the unemployed were demonstrating in Hyde Park. Members of the S.D.F. spoke from various platforms. The speakers included Councillor Parker of Islington. He recalled once hearing at an East-end theatre some lines spoken, which ran:

"Liberal or Conservative, whichever you desire,
One keeps you in the frying pan, the other in the fire."

(Laughter.) What they must do, however, was to make both parties understand that if they would not assist the unemployed, the unemployed would assist themselves. (Cheers.)

Shortly after his return to Parliament Torrance received a knighthood. He never became a Glaswegian but remained an Islingtonian. He died in February 1909 at his home in Highbury Quadrant. During the three years that he sat for Glasgow Central he remained an alien to the city. In this respect as in others I differ from Torrance. I have become a citizen of Glasgow.

In due course, the Labour Party (including S.D.F. members from Islington) ousted the Liberal Party and took its place, both as official Opposition and as Government. What has become of the suggestion that "the unemployed would help themselves"?

I foresaw at the time what would happen. Time has proved that I was right.

CONTENTS

PART VIII. THE SOCIALIST GOOD BOYS
—Concluded

3. Socialist Play-acting
page 265

4. Kautsky and Plekhanov
page 268

5. Lenin Turns Communist
page 270

PART IX. AMONG THE ANARCHISTS

1. The London Secular Society
page 272

2. Lenin in London
page 274

3. Trotsky Visits Lenin
page 276

4. Marx House
page 279

5. 133 Goswell Road
page 282

6. I.U.D.A. Activity
page 285

ILLUSTRATIONS

F. C. Watts
page 266

A. Jacobs
page 267

G. Plekhanov
page 282

133 Goswell Road, 1957
page 283

(133 GOSWELL ROAD SPECIALLY PHOTOGRAPHED BY MR K.J. WELLER OF THE Y.C.L.*)*

PART VIII. THE SOCIALIST GOOD BOYS—*Concluded*

3. SOCIALIST PLAY-ACTING

A man of words and not of deeds
Is like a garden full of weeds.

—PROVERB

I did not actually dislike Kohn when I met him in Hyde Park in 1907 and associated with him during that year. I often had tea or coffee with him at the Marble Arch Café, then a popular resort on the opposite side of Oxford Street from Marble Arch, going east. He amused me a little and I noted many points of his psychology.

The last time I was in London, which must have been about 1940, I noted that the Marble Arch Café was some kind of millinery shop. It was a sad transformation to me. I thought of the tea-meetings we had had there away back in 1907, the metaphysical discussions, and the posing of some of the disputants who afterwards dispersed all over the world. Ashley, for example, whom we regarded as merely a pedant, went to U.S.A., got imprisoned for I.W.W. activity, and wrote poems from jail. Some of these poems were very good. In U.S.A. he was a better man than he was in London. I daresay he owed much of his later courage to these Marble Arch discussions.

Kohn did not belong to this grouping, which may have offended him by the wide nature of its discussions and its treatment of philosophy as being somewhat of a comedy of errors rather than a philosophy of life. I was serious but I could enjoy the interlude of mocking at philosophy ancient and modern. Kohn was to deadly serious and far too exact in all his sayings. I read Marx and Bakunin but I discipled no one. I could be inspired but I hated being jargonised.

Although Kohn did not belong to this set he used the café and I often had coffee with him. Also with another person whom I remember as a very serious young man who wore glasses. I believe that he lived somewhere in Cleveland Street near Tottenham Court Road and with him I often had midnight walks. His name was Kirsch. He looked like a musician and a student and was built slightly. He was poor but looked elegant. He really loved books but did not trade in them. He was free in mind and manner. Only he never smiled.

Kohn expressed the psychology of his party very well. Usually, although I was probably not quite so well off as Kohn, I bought the coffee or tea and cakes. I did not object to doing this. Actually, I enjoyed doing so. I objected to anyone paying for me. It was fun to me to see how Kohn managed quite nicely, so that automatically I was put in the right geographical position to do so. He was most careful but not too scrupulous. To my mind this expressed want of soul. Sometimes, I felt a sorrow for him. It seemed to me that he was wanting in the richness of true being. I believe in expanse of mind, simple yet generous living. He did not know how to define life. I often wondered how a person so moulded could ever hope to play a part in the social revolutionary struggle. My scepticism in this matter caused me to study, not the Marxism, but the psychology of the Good Boys. The accuracy of the conclusion I reached in 1907 was confirmed by the later record of the organisation and its leading members.

It will not militate against the orderly statement of my own evolution to picture the later history of the S.P.G.B. To do this merely defines the unfolding background of my thought and struggle.

The Western Socialist, Boston, Mass., U.S.A., organ of the Workers' Socialist Party of U.S.A., and the Socialist Party of Canada, in its issue for February 1945 (Vol. XII—No. 100), published an editorial tribute to *"Comrade Adolph Kohn"*.

It should be noted in passing that the Workers' Socialist Party of U.S.A. was *not* allowed to call itself the Socialist Party of U.S.A., as a result of an action taken by Norman Thomas in the Capitalist Courts of the U.S.A. Thomas claimed a capitalist copyright in the name! What a miserable and ridiculous action to take! All hail, Norman

Thomas, leader of the Socialist Party of U.S.A. by legal permission of the U.S. Supreme Court! In the name of Eugene Debs, U.S.A. convict for Socialism and anti-militarism, all hail to this miserable political pretender, Norman Thomas! Socialist, forsooth!

The comments of *The Western Socialist* on the career of Kohn indicate the psychology of the Good Boys in all parts of the world.

I quote a passage from its absurd and amazing article:

He [Kohn] was a fearless fighter against capitalism almost all his life. As a teacher, writer and speaker, he gave to the fullest of his remarkable abilities to further socialist understanding.

The Socialist movement of North America acknowledges his outstanding work on this continent. Coming to America as an English "refugee" from the first world war, he was as eager to serve his class as he was reluctant to serve his masters. He arrived in Detroit in the Fall of 1915 and joined Moses Baritz, another member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, in spreading the socialist message.

Kohn went to the United States in 1915 because he was *not* a fearless fighter against capitalism. His abilities were not remarkable and nothing that he has said or written lives.

This senseless sentimental eulogy runs into several paragraphs and suddenly answers itself.

As a writer, he was extremely able. Many of his articles, written under the pen-name of John O'London, appeared in "labor and left" periodicals throughout the continent.

Why did Kohn, if he was so heroic, use the pen-name "John O'London" instead of his own name? The explanation is that he *feared* to write above his own name. He had no heart for battle.

The Western Socialist after describing how Kohn travelled all over the U.S.A. and Canada quotes a long report from Comrade Shepherd, then Dominion Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada.

Shepherd wrote:

As a result of the 1919 General Strike in Winnipeg, four of the best speakers of the Socialist Party of Canada were in jail; others were tied up in jobs or were involved in the union movement. Winnipeg was in a state of turmoil and the SPC occupied the center of the stage. . . .



F. C. WATTS

Someone of Kohn's calibre was needed in Winnipeg and he was invited in the Fall of 1920. With Kohn's arrival, three winter classes got under way—Economics, History and a Speakers' class. The local headquarters became a center of learning.

What has been the result of all this learning?

The Western Socialist concludes:

For Kohn, Socialism and the Socialist movement were the only things worth living for. . . . His sole concern was the making of socialists.

It seems to me that Socialism was Kohn's hobby and not his *sole* concern. There is no dynamic worth in such a person.

I can recall Kohn wandering round Hyde Park in 1907 with either *Das Kapital* under his arm, or one of the Kautsky pamphlets in his hands. This made a joke of his Marxism, to my irreverent mind. And he was prepared to cite Plekhanov to prove that the Anarchists were counter-revolutionary. The actual truth was that he, like other members of his party, had no conception of Socialism or Anarchism.

During this very year (1907) I saw Greek meet Greek. There was an Anarchist who used to wander round Hyde Park just like Kohn did. He was an individualist Anarchist named Mahoney. He lived in great poverty and died in misery. I have no doubt that he was a great soul. He would either have a copy



A. JACOBS

of Proudhon's *Revolutionary Idea* or else Tucker's *Instead of a Book*. It did not matter which book it was for his attitude was the same. If you had *not* read the work he had with him for the moment, you were not a Socialist and you were unworthy of discussion. I saw Kohn meet Mahoney once or twice during this year in Hyde Park. It was a case of the irresistible force and the immovable object. And the result was rare polemic fun.

Anyway, the S.P.G.B., until the reaction of Plekhanov and Kautsky made it absolutely impossible to quote them as authorities, treated these two revisionists as their idols. After that, the party quietly, but definitely, dropped them.

Obviously the party had subtlety of mind but no real capacity for thought. Its members were neither theorists nor actionists. They were just wearisome pedants.

The *Western Socialist* appreciation of Kohn was identical with the tribute that appeared in the *Socialist Standard*, London. It was a dead tribute of words, not of deeds, to one who paid verbal allegiance to revolutionary ideas, and never sought to translate his theory into action. How typically S.P.G.B. Kohn's record was will be seen if we glance at the careers of some other members of the S.P.G.B.

Moses Baritz I came to know intimately through my Hyde Park activity but at a later date than 1907. I liked him personally but, of course, differed from him in the matter of approach. In due course my association with him will be described.

F. C. Watts drafted the S.P.G.B. pamphlet, *Socialism and Religion*. He was an active member of the group that left the S.D.F. to found the S.P.G.B. Watts spoke and wrote largely on Socialist theory. He conducted economic classes at the party's various head offices. He translated many articles by Jules Guesde, who adopted a kind of S.P.G.B. position in France, but finally became a reformist and war-mongering Socialist.

The S.P.G.B., as an indication of its psychology, likes to recall that Watts was a carver by trade, and a first-class craftsman. Some of the internal decorations of the ill-fated *Titanic* were his work; and he also did some of the carving on the coronation chair of George V.

What on earth was a Socialist doing carving on the coronation chair of a king? If he felt that he had to do it as a wage-slave, and must not refuse therefore—a view to which I do not subscribe—why should he and his party rejoice in this matter? Is this not an indication of the non-revolutionary psychology of Watts and of the party? Does it not condemn the entire worth of its propaganda as being without character? Was I not right in 1906-7 to develop a prophetic contempt for the party and its revolutionary philosophy of the armchair or some such seat after working hours, and well outside the workshop?

A. E. Jacomb was also a foundation member af the S.P.G.B. and left the S.D.F. at the same time as F. C. Watts. He was a compositor by trade and was a member of the Executive Committee down to the end of the First Great War. He drafted the two S.P.G.B. pamphlets, *Socialism* and *The Socialist Party: Its Principles and Policy*. His life was one long struggle against financial difficulties but he was actively loyal to the party.

At the end, he opposed the party over its attitude towards the Spanish struggle against Franco and World War II. He died from heart trouble in the autumn of 1946.

Since Jacomb believed in action and protest and thus parted from the S.P.G.B., his attitude condemns the psychology of the party.

A. Jacobs was a cigar maker. In his early days he lived in Edmonton and worked in Battersea. Anyone who knows London and particularly those who knew it over 50 years

ago will understand the terrible daily journey he had to take. There were few trains: no tubes; no electric trains; and no motor buses. He participated in the agitation for more trams and cheap fares. He was arrested, consequently, one morning in Liverpool Street Station and charged with a Breach of the Peace. His trial took place at the Guildhall, and he was defended by W. M. Thompson, at that time editor of *Reynolds News*, and acquitted.

Tribute has been paid to the memory of Thompson in this work. I knew Thompson well. He defended the workers often. He was a disinterested lover of liberty and defender of justice.

Thompson was a lawyer and a reformist. He was one of those rare lawyers who believed in principles of law and treated jurisprudence as a science. I have great respect for his memory. At one time I belonged to his National Democratic League which met in Chancery Lane, London. I left it for the Social Democratic Federation. I cannot understand a Socialist, however, on an issue of principle especially, being defended by a lawyer, however radical, instead of defending himself.

Jacobs was an active member of the Cigar Makers' Union, where he must have met many Anarchists as well as Socialists. He became an executive member of this trade union. Discussions within the union caused him to join the S.D.F. He suffered considerably from unemployment and with his family experienced considerable want.

Shortly after the formation of the S.P.G.B., Jacobs left the S.D.F. and joined the Good Boys grouping. He held from four to six meetings a week and spoke usually twice on Sunday. When war broke out in 1914, despite his party's attitude against "going down in a blaze of glory", he held regular meetings in Victoria Park, Bethnal Green, and faced hostile demonstrations Sunday after Sunday. When "peace" was declared he continued his usual S.P.G.B. lecturing. He was an institution in Victoria Park. Finally his health gave way. He died early in 1940, in his 70th year.

Jacobs' attitude towards the First World War and his persistence in holding anti-war meetings was not typical of the S.P.G.B. There was too much life in his psychology. He was a man who struggled against inevitability. Without this tendency no man can be a true social revolutionist.

Another member of the S.P.G.B. at that time was R. M. Fox. He joined the S.P.G.B. as a result of the eloquence of Anderson but he was not really of the S.P.G.B. frame of mind. Fox left school at the age of fourteen but had a flair for knowledge, literature, and action. He attended some of my meetings in Hyde Park, especially the May Day 1907 one and has left his impressions on record in *Smoky Crusade* and other writings. Since my active association with Fox began later, and we were imprisoned together as war resisters, the story of Fox, a most interesting page of Socialist history, belongs to 1914 and 1916. Fox became an admirer of Connolly and Larkin and has written their lives. He became an authority on the Irish struggle. Our relationship began in much political scrapping but developed into a great deal of friendship. Fox exposed the revolutionary pretensions of the S.P.G.B., and their academic bigotry, with irony and keen insight.

4. KAUTSKY AND PLEKHANOV

The great end of life is not knowledge but action.

—T. H. HUXLEY

In 1907, the Social Democratic movement in Britain, as distinct from the Anarchist, was completely German in theory, statement, and tradition. This amazed me at the time. I was and am very much influenced by the zealous struggling idealism of Richard Carlile. England had a radical tradition which went back long before the time of Carlile. The imperialism of the British ruling class was opposed by the earnest liberalism of the social underworld. I also believed very much in Carlile's faith in the power of the Mechanics' Institutes and the part they were to play in the overthrow of class society. This was an anticipation of revolutionary as distinct from reformist syndicalism. Before I

became an Anarchist or Communist, I believed in direct action and social upheaval.

I was not opposed to Marx. I honoured his memory and sorrowed for the terrible poverty he endured. He did not appeal to me as a man of action and seemed rather a man of intrigue. I accepted his explanation of the utopian movement and agreed that his idea of Socialism being inevitable and involuntary was superior to the romantic idea of Communist colonies formed within capitalist society to compete with capitalism. Voluntary Socialism or organised collectivism of this description was absurd. Fundamentally I felt that Marx was right and I was grateful to him for his great work as a political economist.

Between them, Marx and Engels accomplished a great work of explanation. That did not prevent Marx from turning patriot and militarist during the Franco-Prussian War. It did not prevent Engels from fathering the Labour Party. As men of action, and as inspirers of the social revolution, they failed. Their tactics and approach were completely wrong. About this time I studied Bakunin. I admired him as a man of suffering and of action, a man of great libertarian impulse. In practice he also was a failure. My reaction to Bakunin will be explained when I deal with my Anarchist activity. The truth is the Socialist movement as I knew it in 1907, looked back to the golden age, not forward to its attainment. Anarchists and Social Democrats alike believed in a Garden of Eden, only each believed in a different garden. I did not believe that man had fallen from grace and I did not believe that once upon a time there existed a Garden of Eden. I believed that man had to evolve towards a Garden of Eden. Also, I did not believe that, in the beginning, there was God. I believed that, in the end, man himself became God.

Most curious to me, therefore, was the attitude of the S.P.G.B. It circulated, specially translated by one of its members named Neumann, two pamphlets by Karl Kautsky.

Kautsky was born at Prague, on October 16, 1854. He died at Amsterdam on October 17, 1938. He was living in Vienna when Hitler invaded Austria and escaped to Holland. There is no doubt that during his eighty-four years he was a voluminous writer and propagandist. It is very hard to estimate the exact value of his propaganda. His work on *The Class Struggle,* published in 1892, a year after the famous Erfurt Congress of the Social Democratic Party, discusses that programme. Social Democrats regard the work as a classic. I did not approve of this estimate. What was the value of Kautsky's theorising if he turned chauvinist and betrayed the struggle? I objected to him in 1907 when the S.P.G.B. admired him so. How a party of such strait-laced academic theorists could admire Kautsky I never understood. When, in 1914, on the outbreak of the Great World War, and later, at the time of the Soviet Revolution, Lenin castigated Kautsky so thoroughly, I endorsed all that Lenin said. This seemed to me like the Social Democrats turning Communist and coming round to the point of view I had urged in the press and from the platform since 1907. Kautsky was, without question, an opportunist. In applauding him, the S.P.G.B. proved that they were wanting completely in the power to think. They were not Socialists but parrots. They possessed a metaphysical and not a scientific mind. They were deductive logicians not inductive philosophers. They had jargon but no wisdom. Lenin proved himself able to apply Marxism because his mind was dynamic and scientific. He was the great outstanding Socialist thinker, writer, orator, and practical revolutionist of his time. The genius of social revolution possessed him. He proved that in this year 1907.

The S.P.G.B. also quoted Plekhanov with great respect and made much more of him than even the Social Democratic Federation did. This was as amusing and as astonishing as the Good Boys' regard for Kautsky. For Plekhanov was an opportunist also. Because of the deep antagonism that divided Marx from Bakunin, the S.P.G.B. came to regard Russia as Anarchist territory. As the translator of Marx, Plekhanov was deemed by the Social Democratic mind to have invaded the Anarchist stronghold. Hence the S.P.G.B. worship of Plekhanov.

This was not a sound logical position. I cannot discuss Plekhanov's views at length in this chapter. Between the years 1905 and 1908, the Russian Social Democratic Party, Menshevik section, lost its membership and broke into two main sections, apart from other defections. There were the liquidators, who termed revolutionary thought and agitation romance, and stood for a purely legal policy within the limits of Czarist political organisation of society. Their organ was the *Social Democratic Voice*. A small Menshevik faction under Plekhanov—"Mensheviks true to the

Party"—established an opposition *Social Democratic Diary.*

Plekhanov's break-away did not define the S.P.G.B. position. Writing in 1910, and looking back to this period, Plekhanov attacked those *"who had leaned towards legalism"* and declared that they had transformed themselves *"into champions of progressive bourgeois ideas"*, whereas *"the non-legal"* spokesmen were *"the champions of the revolutionary proletariat"*.

Plekhanov added with truth:

Revolutionary conspiracy is attacked frequently now precisely by those who are unfit for any revolutionary action. They are tired; they want to rest; the heavy ceaseless martyrdom of the self-sacrificing rank and file workers is beyond their strength; they escape from their circles, and try to make themselves and others believe that their flight is no treachery to the cause, but merely its passing over to a sounder basis.

Plekhanov here defends the very policy of revolutionary conspiracy which the S.P.G.B. deplored equally with the liquidators. He remained however a Menshevik and opportunist. His policy was inconsistent in consequence. At that time Trotsky was publishing his *Pravda* in Vienna, and trying to unite all Social Democratic sections. The Bolsheviks were publishing the *Proletariat* in which they assailed both policies.

5. *LENIN TURNS COMMUNIST*

The forces that produced Jesus in the Roman world and Washington in America, will produce a great leader of revolution in Russia, and again in Great Britain.

—ANON.

Plekhanov flourished 1856 to 1918. He was present at the famous fifth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, held at the Brotherhood Church, Southgate Road, North London, from May 13 till June 1, 1907. At this congress there were 330 delegates, representing 150,000 Russian workers. Among the delegates were Lenin, Stalin, Gorky, Trotsky, and Rosa Luxembourg. It was at this congress that the division between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks came to a head. The counter-revolution in Russia had triumphed and the Bankers in Paris and London had advanced the Czar a loan of £90M. The conferences could not have been held but for the fact that Joseph Fels, the American soap manufacturer, advanced the sum of £1,700 to cover expenses.

Mr Fels, of Fels-Naphtha, was a capitalist, but like his partner, a man of remarkable radical ideas. A plaque was placed in the Brotherhood Church by Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador to London, to commemorate this great meeting. When the church was sold and pulled down in 1934 the plaque was returned to the Soviet Union. It should have been preserved in London as a memorial.

The S.P.G.B. has continued to admire Plekhanov for his attack on the Anarchists and for his opposition to the non-legal concepts of revolutionary struggle. Its later opposition to the Soviet Union, during the rise and development of Stalinism, was not prompted by opposition to the mock trials so much as by its opposition to Bolshevism itself.

Lenin in Chapter VI of *State and Revolution* denounced the vulgarisation of Marxism by the opportunists: and declared, with great bitterness and vigour, that the "relation of the State to the social revolution, like the question of the revolution generally, troubled" the leaders of the Second International (1889-1914) "very little". He declares that inspired by the "gradual growth of opportunism which led to the collapse of the Second Intenational in 1919" they *"tried to evade the question or failed to notice it"*.

Lenin denounces the "social chauvinism" of the Social Democrats or Mensheviks and accuses them of standing for "Socialism in words and chauvinism in deeds". For this reason the Bolsheviks changed the name of their party to Communist Party.

He denounces Kautsky for taking a centrist position between Reformism and Marxism and denounces his dilution of Marxism. He avers that Kautsky was the chief representative of the distorters during 1889 and 1914,

that is, over a period of twenty-five years agitation. Lenin states that Plekhanov, Kautsky, and company, had made revolutionary dialectics into an *"empty parliamentary phrase"*.

He reminds the Social Democrats of the view advanced by Marx, that:

The Commune was a working not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time.

Lenin advances the excellent anti-parliamentary argument and comment: *"Engels did not direct his phrase, the 'withering away' of the State, against the Anarchists alone, but against the opportunists."*

Lenin criticises severely Kautsky's *The Driving Forces and the Revolution,* dealing with the Bolshevik-Menshevik struggle of 1905-7, and denounces the Social Democratic Deputies in the Reichstag including even Karl Liebknecht, for voting credits. Liebknecht was opposed to the party's war line but did not vote against credits until December 1914.

Lenin, in Chapter VI of *The State and Revolution,* treats of Plekhanov's controversy with the Anarchists and debunks the latter's *Anarchism and Socialism,* published in German in 1894. Lenin states that Plekhanov ignored *"the most vital, topical, and political essential point in the struggle"* and adds:

"His pamphlet is divided into two parts: one, historical and literary, containing valuable material on the history of the ideas of Stirner, Proudhon and others; the other is philistine, and contains a clumsy dissertation on the theme that an anarchist cannot be distinguished from a bandit."

Lenin had reached this view between 1905 and 1907, but his *State and Revolution* was not written until 1917. I knew little of Lenin in 1907. I had arrived at the same view between 1906 and 1907. Hence my opposition to the Social Democratic Federation, the Labour Party, and the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Without knowing it, I could have defined myself as a Leninist or Bolshevik.

During the same period I found myself opposed to Kropotkin, Grave, and other Anarchists of this school I felt that, at the moment of crisis, they would fail the struggle. And they did. This critical approach is made clear in my writings and the reports of speeches I made.

When the First World War broke out on August 4, 1914, my opposition and criticism of 1907 was justified. Kropotkin and Plekhanov united in defence of imperialist war. When the Soviet Revolution took place in 1917, Kropotkin and Plekhanov were opposed to it. Plekhanov was at one with Alexansky, the Russian Social Democrat, who became a monarchist and a White Guard; Avksentiev, who was first one of Kerensky's ministers, and then a White Guard; and Breshkovskaya, who had participated in the Russian revolutionary movement of the seventies, but was opposed to the October 1917 revolution. It is a condemnation of Stalin, and shows how little he had in common with Lenin that he could reproduce his stupid Social Democratic pamphlet against Anarchism, which was based on the slanderous and ridiculous concept that ran through Plekhanov's attack. Stalin was no Leninist and his claims, when dictator, that he inspired Lenin, were nonsense. Stalin's pamphlet was anti-Leninism.

Trotsky first saw Plekhanov at the end of 1902. That is the period when Plekhanov had completed his theoretical campaign against Narodnikism and revisionism, and was facing the political question of the impending revolution. Trotsky heard Plekhanov speak in the programme commission of the Second Party Congress, in London, July 1903. Trotsky's impression was that Plekhanov was weak in dealing with tactical and organisational questions. Plekhanov did not create the materialistic dialectic but was its crusader in Russia from the beginning of the eighties. His theory led him astray in his analysis of development. He floundered long before the actual crisis of revolution.

At the Paris International Congress of 1889 Plekhanov had already declared that the revolutionary movement in Russia would conquer as a workers' movement or not at all. From this there followed the conclusion that the revolution could not end other than with the transfer of power into the hands of the proletariat. Plekhanov recoiled in horror from this conclusion. Hence his political helplessness and vacillations, crowned by his grave patriotic sinfall.

In time of war, as in time of revolution, nothing remained for the true revolutionary Socialists but to wage an irreconcilable struggle against this view of Plekhanov and the Socialist parliamentarians.

These very vacillations, like those of Kautsky, which could have been prophesied in 1907, endeared Plekhanov to the S.P.G.B. as well as to the S.D.F.

PART IX. AMONG THE ANARCHISTS

1. THE LONDON SECULAR SOCIETY

Yes, it becomes a man to cherish memory,
where he had delight.

—SOPHOCLES

In 1907, I was associating with Social Democrats, the reformist Hyndman-Quelch faction, and discussing a great deal with the Good Boys. I was reaching out towards Anarchism, not only through Socialism, but also through my Freethought activity. The failure of the National Secular Society to recognise this actually untiring activity in North London and Clerkenwell was a great error on the part of G. W. Foote and his supporters. An actual organisation of Freethought arose spontaneously. The National Secular Society could have stepped in and have built a powerful movement. This should have been done because there is a living need for rational culture and thought as well as for economic analysis and culture. Foote was a priest and not a prophet. Hence his failure.

Foote carried himself like a dictator. He never appeared at a meeting in the rough. Always his hair was rounded off at the back of the head and somehow turned in neatly. His beard was a carefully trimmed republican affair. He walked to the platform with great consequence when he had to pass through the meeting. When he appeared from behind the scenes, he strode forward like an actor playing a royal part. He never realised the vanity of his egotism and he lacked all true sense of humour. Many of his speeches were carefully prepared and were recitations miscalled orations. His oratory was artificial for G. W. Foote's one desire was to take over and to dominate the Secular Movement. The man could tolerate no rivals. Like all dictators, his personality expressed meanness. In the end, he became a person of no importance. This is the fate of all kings and dictators.

Foote's refusal to recognise my Freethought activity in Clerkenwell and Islington forced me to organise the Freethought activity in those districts. Hence the formation of the London Secular Society. At that time I felt that the name was very challenging and original. Of course it was not. There had been a London Secular Society in Bradlaugh's time; and before that, in the days of Richard Carlile.

I issued several handbills announcing L.S.C. meetings and discussions. These seem to have been lost, seized or mislaid. I have, however, the letter published in the *Islington Daily Gazette* for Friday, November 23, 1906, announcing the organisation of the society.

The *Gazette* letter reads as follows:

THE LONDON SECULAR SOCIETY

Sir—May I be allowed to intrude upon your space with details that should prove to be of interest to some of your readers? The details in question concern the aims and objects of the London Secular Society, which was founded on August 18th last for the advocacy of certain principles and the securing of certain objects enunciated in a pamphlet of rules, etc., which may be obtained from me. In accordance with these rules we held our quarterly members' meeting on Saturday last at my address, but we adjourned until next Saturday. I should be glad, therefore, if on that occasion any of your readers would be present. The meeting is timed to begin at 8 p.m., and punctual attendance would be considered a favour.

While standing for the free discussion of all questions affecting the peoples' well-being, and the frank advocation of Atheistic-Socialism and accompanying heresies, we have no more regard for the self-styled Atheist and street-corner iconoclast who. with curses against his fellows, denies God's existence, than for the believer who loafs on the strength of Biblical texts and longs for a Paradise he has not earned through any virtuous performance, unless blind belief may be so-called. On the contrary. we stand for "the promotion of the love of truth, the practice of virtue, and the influence of individual self-respect

as opposed to the pernicious influence of foolish and contradictory principles of so-called "religious faith". We, therefore, desire to constitute indoors a free and open platform, which may be occupied by members of any and every sect—and particularly the more despised—who shall be willing to pursue the ordinary methods of public debate and to extend to others that courtesy that fairplay and truth-seeking aspirations demand the extension of to them.

We do not desire to stew in our juice, nor because we claim to be Rationalists, to overlook the need for free and fair discussion. Priestcraft, we desire to point out, is not peculiar to Christianity, but is common to every creed; and it is not so much creed as truthful intents we desire to cultivate. Right beliefs, it is true, can alone be the cause of right actions; but the fundamental principle is the placing of truth and its attainment before one's own opinions and one's own welfare. Once let men desire to learn what their relations really are to the phenomena around them, and to the philosophical receipt, known in terms of thought, as "the ultimate", "the absolute", Kant's "categorical", Haeckel's "universal substance", and Spencer's "unknowable", and bigotry will cease.

When one considers the idea that inspired the primitive savage in his mistaken views of God, and traces the history of theology, it can be seen that the philosophical idea of the "absolute", a belief in which is necessitated by Reason, as opposed to reasoning, is the lineal successor of barbaric ghosts and man-made gods, and may be poetically termed "the mother and father of our existence", the source from which we sprang, the infinite and eternal energy, the nature unknowable, alike inapprehensible and incomprehensible—in brief, "God". This fact alone justifies one in desiring to be true to his reason, and to refuse to mount the tripod of other-worldism, while so much has to be done here—on the phenomenal, and, to man, the only real plane of existence.

The London Secular Society, therefore, whilst aiming at the entire revolution of our present state of society, also proposes to establish a lending library, a truth-seekers' ideas exchange forum, and the institution of literary and debating evenings at my address during the winter. Those who are desirous of assisting forward the good causes of truth and sentient emancipation from serfdom and suffering along these lines, are invited to be present at our meeting, at 8 p.m., on Saturday next, when our rules will come up for discussion.

I am, etc.,

GUY A. ALDRED,

(Minister of the Gospel of Freethought, and hon. secretary, London Secular Society)

133 Goswell Road, London, E.C.

I do not say that all the ambitions were realised. A great many meetings, indoor and out, were held. Meetings were held in various parts of London. Some were held all over the East End and reached out to Stepney on the one side and Hammersmith on the other. Regular meetings were held also at Rushcroft Road, Brixton, and as far as Streatham Common and even Croydon in the South-West. All this activity was ignored by *The Freethinker* and the National Secular Society.

Actually, this Freethought experience was typical of my activity at this time and of all later years to the present time. I did pioneer work as a Freethinker and have been crowded out of the Freethought movement. I did pioneer work as a Socialist, first as a Social Democrat, and was crowded out. I was the first person really to raise the banner of Communism in Britain and was crowded out of the movement. William Morris raised it before me but Morris really raised it like a gentleman and for a comparatively short period. Despite some fine writing on his part, and a few meetings in the open-air of which much has been made, it cannot be said that William Morris lasted the distance. He was the artist, the intellectual, and always the man of wealth, rejoicing in epicureanism. If one considers his associates and their destiny, including George Bernard Shaw, one realises that Morris was outstanding in his development of charlatans As a Communist, he lacked the power of real sacrifice and true devotion.

Breaking away from William Morris as he returned to the S.D.F. from the Socialist League were some who became Anarchists. One of these was a police agent. None of them was effectual or truly vigorous.

In any case, through Communism I found myself among the Anarchists. Here, of course, I became an outlaw. If one really views the Anarchists and the Anarchist movement in Britain it is clear that they lacked courage and purpose. The movement was, in many ways, an ignoble one. Yet it ought to have been the great expression of true Socialism.

I opposed war, with tongue, pen, and personal resistance. Yet the Pacifists have treated me as a pariah and engaged in falsehood to urge that certain persons who are really not Pacifists at all, should be viewed as Pacifists. This studied disgraceful treatment calls for consideration in due course of record. I mention it here because my experience among Freethinkers fills my mind with wrath and resentment.

I have no desire to pretend to be greater than I am in my reactions to life. The essence of autobiographical record is truth. Whether to my credit or otherwise I desire to state facts clearly. My reaction to events is practical but the index to it is to be found in what I say personally. The reader need not accept what I say. He must pause to examine it and so form his own estimate.

My resentment is not entirely egotism. It is obvious that for over fifty years I had the power to think, to speak boldly, to act boldly, and to act without safeguarding my future. During all this period my desire to serve and to advance the cause of humanity has been frustrated by worthless, pettifogging self-seekers. Many of these people have joined the great majority. Others still corrupt the earth with their careerism, etc. They are to be found all over the country. They have secured their existence at the expense of much human suffering and of thousands who are dead. The stupid rank-and-file of the working class, the "team-workers" of the Freethought movement, of the Socialist, Communist, and even Anarchist movement, have made this disaster possible. Today it is being proven beyond all dispute that, away back in 1906, I was right in my reaction to life and the social struggle. If the common people had had ears with which to hear, two world wars would have been avoided. Millions now dead would have been still alive. The earth would have been a sweeter place in which to live. Even now, whilst complaining of the collapse of this and that movement, the common people still do not realise their responsibility for what has happened.

My experience among the Freethinkers, evolving with like treatment by the Socialists, depicts the reality of the people's failure. Folk look back to the golden days of the movement, to the giants of yesterday, just like orthodox religious people looked back in Victorian times and before to the mythical garden of Eden and humanity's fall from grace. There never was a garden of Eden and there has been no fall from grace. The great days of our movement or expressions of radical progress do not belong to yesterday. They belong to tomorrow and we have to grow in greatness today. The entire structure of our movement is wrong. We have looked back to pygmies and mistaken them for giants.

2. LENIN IN LONDON

Iylich once took him to some meeting in Whitechapel. Like the majority of Londoners, Mr Raymond had never visited this part of the town, populated by Russian Jews, who lived their own kind of life unlike that of the rest of the city. It quite astonished him.

—N. K. KRUPSKAYA. *"Memories of Lenin"*

During 1907 my own tendency towards heresy within heresy was shaping my destiny. Since 1904 external factors in my environment were moving towards a cohesion with inward evolution. The meeting of the two forces meant the completion of my character and purpose. I then became a power and a unit in my own right without any necessity of apology or tentativeness. Although there was still much to learn, there was a settled approach and understanding.

I have described how, in 1904, Daniel De Leon visited Clerkenwell and spoke on Clerkenwell Green. Actually he spoke almost outside the Twentieth Century Press. This visit introduced me to a knowledge of Industrial Unionism. De Leon hated Anarchism and the Anarchists. That is because his own doctrine was a mixture of Bakunin and Marx. Whatever his errors, Bakunin correctly applied Marxism to the constitutional issue in society, and stood for a Workers' Industrial Commune

or Communist Society. De Leon's hatred merely caused me to study Bakunin. I am by nature a heretic and it is foolish, even in the name of the movement, to attach the ban of "outlawry" on any thinker, writer, or agitator. The ban may be justified: but I must know why. I do not believe in outlawry merely because I am told that I must so believe. Despite the most important small truth he embodied in his industrial unionism, De Leon was intellectually as well as physically a small man. I do not like small minds. When they assume Socialist labels, they become anathema to me.

Then came the break away of the S.P.G.B. from the S.D.F., which I have described. In December 1906, the Islington Branch of the S.P.G.B. broke away from that organisation over this very question of De Leonism. The S.P.G.B. held that it was a pure Marxist organisation. Actually, it was more Lassallean than Marxist, but it was certainly a simon-pure parliamentary organisation. Here then were staged the issues of Syndicalism, Anarchism, and Communism, the latter being interpreted usually and wrongly as identical with Social Democracy.

The years 1904-1907 were most interesting and important years of fruitful study and discussion. In London, at this time, I was in the very thick of such radical discussion. My mind responded like virgin soil. I rejoiced in this turnover of thought, this thrust and parry of theoretical conflict, and the attempt to visualise the practical consequences of the theories proclaimed. As I write. I relive the period. I cannot hope to make a younger generation, inspired by a very different approach, understand the importance of the time. It was a formative era: yet even those who participated in it did not realise what an epoch it was. I have watched often a baby in its mother's arms, and have tried to penetrate the years, and speculate as to its fate. An impossible thing to do. Yet the yearning after this impossibility moves me from time to time. In the era in which we live, and all that it predicates, we rarely speculate. In our secret minds we feel that there is a terrible unreality in our theorising and we do not understand the hidden moving underworld. History repeats from generation to generation this strange approach to the ephemeral world, of such seeming import, and virtual denial of the vital real world of change that is not suspected even by those who play a part in it. The underworld is the underlying reality.

During this period I repudiated Kautsky and the German school of pseudo-Marxists. I repudiated Plekhanov when all the Social Democrats were quoting him as an authority against Anarchism. I studied Anarchism and began to associate with Anarchists. Yet I was not greatly welcomed by them. I did not know that there was in London, accepted yet unrecognised by the movement, a man whose destiny it was to overshadow Marx; to brush aside completely the German school of Kautsky and such Social Democrats.

If one reads the various books published at this time (1907) on the history of the Socialist movement, and the theories advanced by Socialists, one will find little or no reference to Lenin. No one suspected that St. Petersburg, afterwards Petrograd, would change its name to immortalise his memory. No one suspected the world influence that he would come to exercise. Yet such was his destiny.

I was beginning to frequent North London, Clerkenwell Green, Hyde Park, and other centres of discussion, and had just ceased from being the Holloway Boy Preacher when Lenin, pioneer and leader of the Russian Revolution, founder of the world's first Soviet Republic, became a figure among the Socialist exiles in London. Whilst I was struggling to think, this man was conspiring to embody his thoughts into bricks and mortar, to transform them from words into deeds, to mould them into a new Constitution and define a society that would remove and replace Czardom. Here was the one real revolutionary Social Democrat I could have known. I saw his name mentioned in *Justice* and gave it little heed. Maybe I passed him in the street and knew him not. Certainly, he was in Hyde Park sometimes when I was there speaking. And yet, strangely enough, though Lenin was ignorant of the fact on his side also, I was developing ideas which approximated to those he evolved in relation to the various aspects of the social revolutionary struggle.

To escape imprisonment and exile under the Czarist government, Lenin was compelled to live abroad for fifteen years of his life. He spent a little over a year of this period in England.

3. TROTSKY VISITS LENIN

Great revolutions, whatever may be their causes, are not lightly made, and are not concluded with precipitation.

—DISRAELI, EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

Lenin and Comrade Nadezhda Krupskaya arrived in London in April 1902 from Munich, where he edited *Iskra*, the newspaper of the Russian social democrats. Its publication became impossible in Munich owing to the activity of the Czarist secret police or Okhrana. Lenin had the editorial office transferred to London.

Describing their first impressions of the British capital, Krupskaya wrote in her *Memories of Lenin:*

"The vast grandeur of London impressed us. Although the weather was filthy the day we arrived, Lenin brightened up at once and began to look around at this stronghold of capitalism with curiosity. . . ."

On his arrival in London Lenin made arrangements to print *Iskra* at the office of the Twentieth Century Press. This was the headquarters of the S.D.F., which was then publishing its official organ, *Justice.*

Iskra conducted a voluminous correspondence with Russia. Lenin was in close touch with events in his native land. Lenin edited *Iskra* in the small top-floor room of the Twentieth Century Press.

Lenin and Krupskaya took two small rooms on the top floor of a house at 30 Holford Square, Finsbury—destroyed by bombs during the Second World War. The rooms were very simply furnished; Krupskaya kept house herself, doing all the shopping, cooking and tidying up. Actually, they lived very frugally, and in a kind of genteel but happy poverty. They lived as became exponents of the workers' struggle and went in for no pretentious intellectualism. They were compelled to live under the assumed name of Richter. The landlady thought they were Germans!

Joseph Kruk, then leader of the Polish "Left" Socialists, was friend of both Lenin and Trotsky at this time. In 1936, Kruk reviewed Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution.* Here is a passage describing an interesting visit that Lenin received soon after his arrival in London:

Thirty years ago, towards the end of 1903 in London, at a very early hour in the morning, a youthful, tall, energetic man steps quickly from a cab, and nervously knocks three times at a door of a small house in Euston. After a few minutes a lady with a fine intellectual face comes to the door, wondering who it can be at such an early hour. She is very much surprised when she hears the visitor's name. She lets him in and quickly awakens her husband, a short, stocky figure with a bristly head. They both greet the visitor heartily, and begin a long, long talk about the Russian Revolutionary Socialist Movement.

The visitor was young Leo Trotsky, just escaped from exile in Siberia. His host was Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and his wife.

Krupskaya, in her simple and classic work, *Memories of Lenin,* (1893-1917)—published by Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1942—also describes this visit of Trotsky. She tells also of Plekhanov's visit to London about the same time. Every Socialist should read this wonderful yet sad book. It will rank as a great historical work.

The next meeting of Lenin and Trotsky took place nearly fifteen years later. It was in Petrograd, after the victory of the first (March) Revolution. Lenin had come from Switzerland, through Germany, with the permission of the Kaiser who did not foresee the result of Lenin's arrival in Russia. The other had come from the United States after being detained and interned in Canada. Seven months of common effort followed. Then Trotsky, as President of the Petrograd Council of Workers' Deputies, proclaimed Russia as a Socialist Republic, of which Vladimir Lenin became the first Prime Minister.

For seven years they worked together. Then in January 1924, Lenin died. Trotsky received a letter from Krupskaya, saying:

Dear Lev Davydovitch—I write to tell you that a month before his death, Lenin, reading your book, stopped at the place where you characterise Marx and Lenin. He asked me to

read to him this passage. He listened very attentively and later he read it himself. And I will add: the attitude which Lenin had when you came to us in London from Siberia, he didn't change to his death. I wish you health and every good. —KRUPSKAYA

Five years after Lenin's death, as if celebrating that event, Trotsky was expelled from Soviet Russia to Turkey. He had organised the Soviet Revolution and the Red Army; yet he became, after returning to Revolutionary Russia, an exile for the second time. On August 21, 1940 he was assassinated in Mexico City.

Trotsky explained his rise and fall in an excellent analysis of the people's reaction. He was sixty-one at the time of his murder. The question has been asked: would he have made any further difference in the social evolution of the world had he escaped his murder? The question is speculative and cannot be answered. It has been said that, in view of his teaching, it is as well that he did not escape. The doctrine, for which Lenin and he stood, that you must destroy what exists before you can build what will replace it, is said to be the exact opposite of that held by the Labour Party in Britain. It is certainly the exact opposite of parliamentarism. But parliamentarism has given us two world wars and is preparing for a Third. It has given us the A-bomb and the H-bomb and conscription. It has yielded careers to M.P.'s but has given no prosperity to the common people. I do not see that parliamentarism has any right to censure Trotskyism or Leninism.

Looking back to this time when Trotsky visited Lenin in London, and I, unknown to both, was agitating all over London for the social revolution in ignorance of their presence in the city, I have wondered often if they tried to see into their future and visioned their respective destinies. What a shock the crystal-gazing would have given them!

Lenin and Krupskaya had studied English in Russia from text-books and self-instruction. While in exile in Siberia they had translated the Webbs' *Industrial Democracy* into Russian. Yet they could neither speak nor understand what was said in London. This may condemn them or it may condemn the Cockney tongue.

To overcome his failure to master the language orally Lenin put the following advertisement in a London paper:

Russian doctor of law and his wife desire to take English lessons in exchange for Russian.

Had I seen this innocent advertisement at the time I would never have suspected that its author or instigator was destined to become the most famous revolutionist the world had known.

Lenin received three satisfactory replies to his advertisement. As a result he found himself soon quite at home with the spoken English and became a good English speaker. This enabled him to study the working-class movement, to enquire into the living conditions and outlook of the workers, and to attend their meetings. Twice he addressed Russian Social Democrats in Whitechapel, once on the peasant question in Russia, and again on the Paris Commune. He also directed a study circle of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. He made a wide use of the libraries and spent a good deal of time at the British Museum. He put London above Geneva as a place of interest in his wanderings and he studied closely a map of London in order to find his way about the city. He liked long rides on the tops of buses. With Krupskaya he went frequently to Hyde Park where they stood round the Atheist and Socialist platforms, as well as occasionally the Christian Evidence one. Once, I believe, he listened at the Salvation Army platform.

The Hyde Park meetings gave Lenin an insight into the mind of the common people in London. They helped him to study the language. Despite their influence on him, and the fact that he went to every possible place where the people assembled, lay about the grass in Hyde Park, went into cheap cafés, public houses and reading rooms, Lenin was not emancipated from his unfortunate Social Democratic and parliamentary associates in Britain. His mind was beyond them and yet he missed true Communist association.

Lenin was then nearing thirty-three years of age. He attended the famous Brotherhood Church in Southgate Road where F. R. Swan afterwards became the minister and propagandist. One of the most disinterested and bravest public characters in London. Once he heard a lecture here on Municipal Socialism.

Unlike his Russian comrades, Lenin liked taking walks round London. With Krupskaya he visited Primrose Hill quite a lot and loved it for its fine view across London. After one such walk, Lenin wrote home to his mother:

We are the only ones of all the comrades here who are studying ALL the environs of the town. We find all kinds of 'rural' paths, know all the places nearby, and are planning to make trips further out.

I also went to Primrose Hill a lot for exactly the same purpose at this time. Lenin must have developed the true Cockney love of London.

It seems strange to me that, all this time, our paths were crossing. I spoke often on Clerkenwell Green opposite the Twentieth Century Press when Lenin must have been inside, attending to his editorial work, or worrying London comrades about the printing of *Iskra* (The Spark) which was published here in 1902-1903, and of which Lenin was the first Editor-in-Chief. Lenin revisited London several times in the following years and must have visited the Twentieth Century Press at 37a Clerkenwell Green. Once I became a Social Democrat and even after I left the S.D.F., I was constantly in and out of the building, over the notes and articles I wrote for *Justice*, or about some meeting I had been asked to address. I often ran into strange comrades from other lands, mostly Russia or Germany. It is most likely that Lenin was among these comrades on some occasion. Yet we never met consciously. Greetings may have passed between us, but they were casual, and not deliberate. Yet, during the year of the fifth Russian Social Democratic Labour Party Congress, I was to establish the first avowedly Communist Propaganda Group in Britain at 133 Goswell Road. Goswell Road is only a stone's throw from Clerkenwell Green, if one takes the proper short-cut.

The second, third and fifth congresses of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party were held in London (July-August 1903, April-May 1905 and May-June 1907). Their importance was not realised at the time, but these congresses played a great part in developing the Soviet Revolution, founded upon the principles in ideas and organisation worked out by *Iskra*.

Lenin returned to London for each congress and took an active part in the proceedings.

At the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.F., in 1903, a political group, the Bolsheviks, headed by Lenin, had been formed.

After leaving London, Lenin spent many years in Switzerland, France, and Austria-Hungary.

Strangely enough, although I cannot recall exchanging a word with Lenin, at the many places where we must have crossed each other's paths, I did hear of him through the activity of the Communist Propaganda Group which brought me into contact with the Russian (mostly but also German) Anarchists and Social Democrats resident in Whitechapel, Mile End, and Stepney at that time.

Lenin addressed occasional meetings in Whitechapel. The Czarist "Third Section" or Secret Police was in close contact with the Special Branch at Scotland Yard. It was pressing also for the persecution of Russian refugees and frequently advised the police in London that some desperado (meaning political refugee) was on his way to England. Ex-Chief Detective Inspector Brust, of Scotland Yard, in his memoirs published in January 1929, stated that often

a wholly false and perfectly dreadful catalogue of crimes would be tacked on to a man's record with a view to earning his disfavour with the British police.

In time this habit of the Russian Secret Police defeated itself, for nobody attached the slightest importance to what they said.

Actually, the Russian Socialist refugees in Britain were quiet, well-behaved ordinary citizens. They were inspired with radical ideas. They wished to bring about a fundamental social change. As individuals, decency in their relationships with others and with the folk among whom they lived, life in the terms of equity, were the hall-marks of their revolutionary integrity. The *Workers' Friend* Club in Jubilee Street was the centre of Russian refugee activity.

Inspector Brust describes a meeting that the Czar's Secret Police wished to have suppressed. The Czar was on his way to Vienna when he heard about a great London meeting at this club. His special train was turned back to Moscow and the Emperor went into hiding. One of the chiefs of the Secret Police came specially to London and put up at the Ritz Hotel. Brust feared that, if this official ventured into an East End refugee meeting, he would never leave it alive. The man was hated for his crimes against humanity, callously defined as protecting the Czar. He didn't attend but he sent several spies and agents.

Brust attended the meeting with other British police. At one stage there was an uproar. Brust and his colleagues rushed in and saw a man being held back by several others.

He was trying to reach a small bearded man who was rolling a cigarette between his fingers. Brust and other police gripped the struggling man but he was flanked by two men on each side. They exclaimed: *"It is not him. He was attacked."*

"Lie, lie," roared half the meeting. *"All five are spies. Down with the spies!"*

The man himself spoke to Brust: *"You are a police officer?"* he asked.

"Yes," replied Brust.

"Get us out," he whispered. *"I will explain outside. For God's sake, be quick. My life is in danger."*

"I ordered the arrest of the five men, to save them," Brust explained afterwards. *"Also of the small man who was rolling his cigarette."*

At this there was a howl of execration. The crowd did not mind about the five men. It knew that they were being rescued. But it sensed danger, deportation, exile, and dungeons, for the small man whom the other was wanting to assassinate or seize.

Suddenly the voice of Peter Kropotkin rose above the storm. He had taken the platform and had determined on order.

"Silence! Listen to me!" shouted Kropotkin. *"We have nothing to fear! Our comrade is perfectly safe with the British police. There are those of us here who will vouch for him."*

Without more ado the six prisoners were marched off to the local police station. The man who requested to be arrested stated that he was Captain Martin of the Propajensky Regiment, loaned to the Third Section.

He had visited the meeting on instructions from Moscow, been recognised and nearly lynched. The little man, he said, was the most dangerous revolutionary of all. The captain had followed him all over Europe.

Brust showed no sympathy with Martin. He told him that, as a secret service officer and actual spy, he was taking a great liberty to attend meetings of political refugees in Britain. His presence was calculated to lead to a breach of the peace and possible assassination. Finally, he and his associates were released and escorted to the West End in cabs.

The little man was Lenin!

Lenin stood calmly in the police station while Prince Kropotkin quietly but firmly vouched for him as a good citizen and a harmless refugee. General Mandorff, another famous refugee, living in exile at Hampstead, also spoke in eulogy of him. Baron Kening, another most respectable refugee, spoke next to the same effect. Lenin was released. There was no doubt that man was a Socialist and a good citizen in himself. Before leaving the station, he paid a glowing compliment to the efficiency and humanity of the London police.

A short time later I was told the story at the Jubilee Street Club. Later still, in Dunstan Houses, Stepney Green, where Rocker then lived, the story was told to me again. In this way, I became aware of Lenin's presence and activity in London.

4. *MARX HOUSE*

On the ground of the class struggle, we are invincible. If we leave it we are lost, because we are no longer Socialists.

—WILLIAM LIEBKNECHT

Marx House was founded as the Marx Memorial Library and Workers' School in 1933, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx. The names of the persons who took the initiative in creating the memorial never impressed me. Its work can prove to be work of great value so long as it discharges the functions of record and scholarship impartially and without sectional purpose or bias. Marx did not exhaust Socialism any more than Jesus exhausted humanity. Marx may have defined the historic mission of the working class with a theoretical precision that merits universal applause. In practice he deviated badly very often. I would not consider him a sound revolutionist as a man. His theoretical work was invaluable. Engels was a loyal friend and admirer of Marx, a truly devoted colleague. Yet Engels pioneered the founding of the colossal democratic fraud, the Labour Party. There is no point in not recognising and recording this fact.

The importance of being born in Clerkenwell I have stressed in previous chapters. Although Clerkenwell Green has been men-

tioned, because of my close asscciation with the Twentieth Century Press, and the constant and untiring propaganda I conducted on Clerkenwell Green, I have not given to the Green the place it merited in this autobiography. Clerkenwell Green is a fitting locus for a Socialist Memorial Library and the site of the old S.D.F. headquarters at 37a Clerkenwell Green the very spot on which it should stand.

Clerkenwell Green has been identified with the struggle for social justice and freedom since the days of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. History associates the Green with:

(1) The Fight for Parliamentary Reform led by the old-time Radicals, which challenged Borough-mongering and did aim at an expression of democracy.

(2) The fight for a Free Press and the right of the common people to discuss freely and to express themselves without fear of victimisation.

(3) The immortal name of Richard Carlile.

(4) The struggle of the Chartists, thus linking Clerkenwell Green with the memory of Ernest Jones.

(5) The activities of Marx during his early days in London and the founding of the First International.

This was brought about by Thomas Mottershead, who made 37a Clerkenwell Green into a Radical Club. Mottershead was one of the founders of the International Working Men's Association. Marx opened debates and delivered lectures at the club.

On October 27, 1867, the minutes of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association record:

"That the next meeting shall be held at the Clerkenwell Coffee House."

There is little doubt that meetings of this body were held there until as late as 1868.

(6) Lenin, when he edited *Iskra,* from London.

It is correct, historically, to direct attention to the fact that here Lenin pursued his revolutionary activity. I do not think, however, that it is sound recording for the founders of Marx House to identify Marx House with the name of Lenin in the way that they do.

The site on which Marx House now stands was originally part of a convent. In the early eighteenth century it became a school for Welsh orphans. Then it became a Radical coffee-house. William Lovett, Richard Carlile, Robert Taylor, Henry Hunt all mention meetings here.

From this coffee-house one of the biggest Chartist demonstrations was organised, with Ernest Jones as the speaker, on May 15, 1848. The secret report of the police averred that more than 15,000 were "massed at a place known as Clerkenwell Green".

On Saturday, June 2, 1848, Clerkenwell Green was occupied by a squadron of Horse Guards, and 5,000 police were concentrated round the area. On the same day Ernest Jones and four other Chartist leaders were arrested and charged with having, on May 26, 1848, "in a certain open space called Clerkenwell Green, maliciously and seditiously published and uttered, and pronounced certain wicked and seditious words". All five were convicted and sentenced to two years hard labour.

As I have shown in my various essays, after the collapse of the First International, *national* parliamentary Socialism, chatter within the imperial parliaments, and loyalty to the capitalist Fatherlands or Motherlands, replaced the living International Socialist struggle. Kautsky, the German chauvinist, and Hyndman, the British chauvinist, became the Social Democratic leaders. *This was not Leninism.* It is dishonest to pretend that it was.

In 1883, the S.D.F. founded its weekly paper, *Justice,* to which in 1904, I became a contributor. I was a regular writer to it during 1905 to 1907. The paper was founded three years before I was born.

Justice was printed, at first, in a small and dingy cellar in Sandland Street, Bedford Row. Two years later, Hyndman and Champion formed the Twentieth Century Press to print *Justice,* and transferred the press to 37-38 Clerkenwell Green, with Harry Quelch as editor.

From this address were issued the first English editions of Marx's *Wage-Labour and Capital, The Civil War in France,* and *The Poverty of Philosophy,* which Quelch translated. Daniel De Leon's translation of the *18th Brumaire* was circulated from the same office.

Besides *Justice,* Quelch edited *The Social Democrat,* the monthly organ of the S.D.F. I wrote for both papers.

Lenin has left a record of his thanks for the help Quelch gave to the Russian Social Democrats during their 1902-3 exile in London. Lenin wrote:

The English Social Democrats, led by Quelch, immediately placed their printing plant at our disposal to print "Iskra". Quelch had himself to "squeeze up" in his office (a corner separated off by a thin partition had to serve him as his editorial office). This was furnished with a very small writing table with a bookshelf over it, and a chair.

I think that it was quite right for Lenin to put on record his indebtedness to Quelch. I believe also that, this sense of indebtedness, explains much error in Lenin's approach towards the social revolutionary struggle. Actually, he had moved beyond the Social Democratic concept, but he confined himself to world Social Democratic alliances. He was always the Russian revolutionary and not the proletarian world revolutionary, although he was inspired with the idea of world revolution. The result, when the revolution came in Russia and Lenin became its spokesman, was disastrous to the movement in Britain.

Quelch was invited to address the famous Fifth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, held at the Brotherhood Church, London, from May 13 to June 1, 1907. Quelch spoke on May 16 and said, in part:

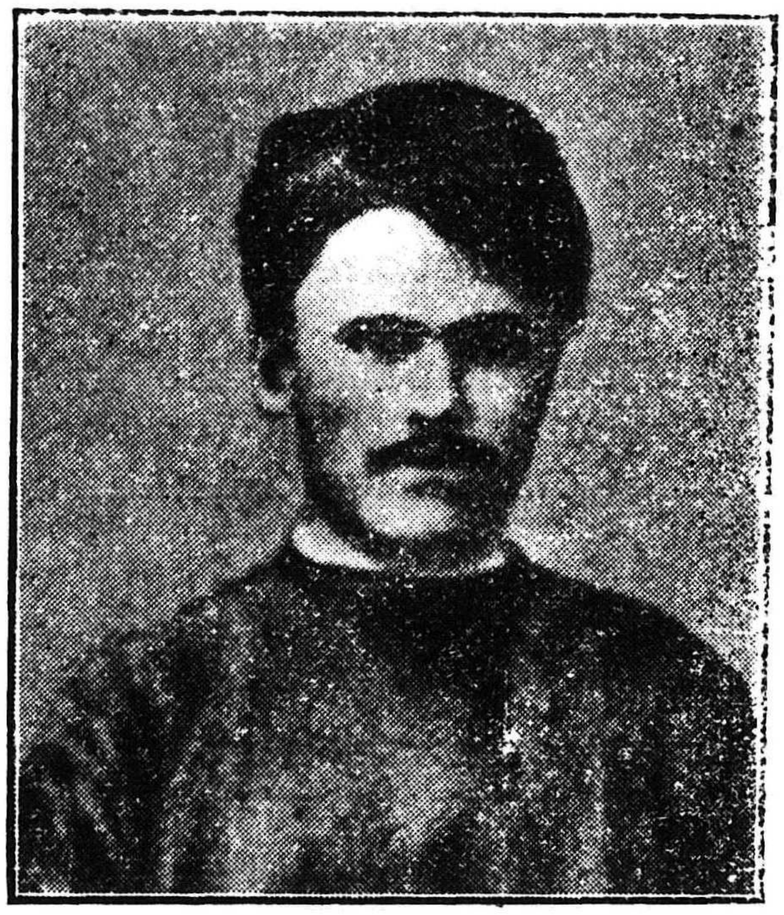
Comrades, I am glad of the opportunity of speaking at this assembly, the most extraordinary in Europe. Not only in words, but as brothers in deeds, we are ready to help you in your great cause. . . . We assure you not only of our sympathy but of our readiness to help you in your great work. And we can and do more than assure you. The West European States are constantly aiding the Russian government, and thereby facilitating the atrocities of the autocracy. Now and always we shall help you to fight against the efforts of the West European capitalists to give financial aid to the Russian autocracy, that citadel of world reaction. Once again I greet your Congress and heartily wish you success in your labours.

To the delegates this speech must have sounded good and full of promise. Quelch and his colleagues would have made good all the minor pledges. Examined closely, the speech contains much platitude and is a little empty. It showed no understanding of the great departure from Social Democracy that Lenin was planning. Lenin admired the speech because it made the Russian Revolution dominant. The world struggle did not turn to Russia to assist freely and fully. It yielded to Russia and was dominated by it. Lenin understood the Russian Revolution. He had developed a clear conception of a workers' revolution, based on the lessons of the Paris Commune. But he saw Moscow the centre of the world revolution and the Bolsheviks legislating for the world. He did not see the Soviet Russian struggle as part of the world's advance towards social emancipation. He mistook the river, albeit a mighty river, for the ocean. A grave error in one so logical and so clear in his thought.

This is the old problem that has disturbed humanity ever since the dawn of class society. It is the challenge that mysticism presents to mankind at the birth of every new epoch: the relation of the messenger to his message. It is the question of the man and his message, of the apostle and the word.

In himself, Lenin was a man of modest bearing and frugal living. He deemed himself, personally, to be nothing. He was equal to each comrade and superior to none. And then some question arose and swept him out of himself. He became the word. He regarded himself as *the* movement of the Russian Revolution. If one reads Krupskaya's *Memories of Lenin*, this fact becomes apparent. Lenin now speaks as one feeling authority welling up within him and he is no longer Lenin, but the very voice of God to his day and generation. Later events may have tended to justify this vision of power and status. Contemporary circumstances gave no indication that he was correct. This fact may incline later generations to feel that his inspiration and belief were the greater because of this very ignorance.

It is a fact that Lenin became the outstanding leader of the Russian Revolution. His association with 37a Clerkenwell Green has become a landmark in history. Between 1903 and 1907, the association was a matter of no importance to the comrades. His name had no meaning for them. He was simply a Russian exile, propagandist and revolutionary, one of many. It was not till seven years later that the First World War destroyed the reputation of Kautsky. The same war destroyed the reputation of the British Social Democrats. Then came the Russian Revolution. The old gods had passed. There was no godhead. Lenin became the historic candidate for the position. A dangerous evolution to a most unfortunate eminence for one who was born to free humanity. Lenin evolved in-



PLEKHANOV

to a dictator, to be succeeded by a worse dictator, whereas his function was that of an emancipator.

Trotsky has contrasted Marx, the man of theory, with Lenin, the man of action. Lenin was a theorist of revolution who never divorced his theory from action. He *lived* revolution. This complete union of theory and practice constituted the unique greatness of Lenin. The whole of Marx is in his writing. Important but inadequate. The whole of Lenin is expressed in revolutionary action. His writings are merely his preparation for action. He was born to translate Marx into reality: to give *constructive* purpose to Bakunin's mighty iconoclasm of action: and so to dwarf both these pioneers. Yet he never understood the greatness of his own destiny.

If only Lenin, in his quest for knowledge, had happened on the Bakunin Press at 133 Goswell Road, there would have been a very different Communist movement in Britain. The tragedies of the Stalin mock trials would have found no apologists in Britain.

5. *133 GOSWELL ROAD*

Insurrection of thought always precedes insurrection of arms.

—WENDELL PHILLIPS

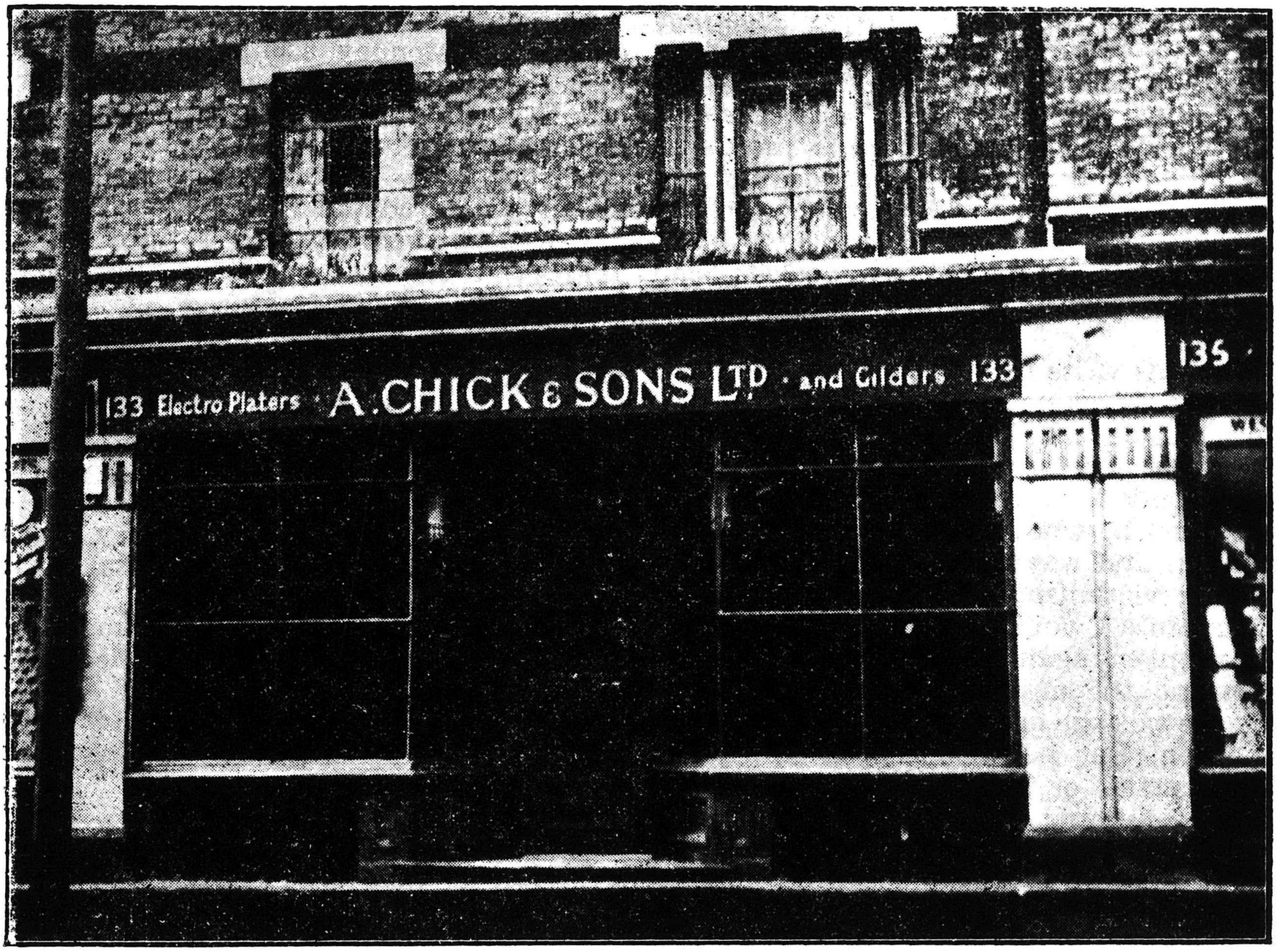
In 1907, 133 Goswell Road was a bootshop. The occupier was Arthur Mignot. He had a hosier's shop next door at 135. My mother had a sublet of the rooms at the back and the big basement. It was here that my revolutionary career began.

Prior to 1902, 133 Goswell Road had no place in revolutionary history. In that year, as this record shows, I set out from 133 to be what the *Islington Gazette* termed "the Holloway Boy Preacher". Then, without pause, I became the Theistic Missioner on Clerkenwell Green. Argument followed argument, and then one fine Sunday, I turned up as usual, platform and all, only I had a different board above the platform, stating boldly: *"I am now an Atheist"*. There was no pause.

I spoke at the same spot on the Green, during the same period, for the National Democratic League, W. M. Thompson's organisation. Again, also without pause, I turned up one Sunday morning and walked across to the Social Democratic platform. One of my fellow speakers was Cluse, afterwards militarist, war-mongēr, and M.P. Never once was the name of Lenin mentioned at this time.

At these S.D.F. meetings I mentioned often, and not unfriendly, Bakunin and referred to the difference between Anarchism and Social Democracy. I received an invitation from John Turner, then organiser of the Shop Assistants' Union and later its General Secretary, to write for *Freedom*, the monthly Anarchist paper published in London, and for the weekly, then being planned, *The Voice of Labour*. I agreed. *The Voice of Labour* survived thirty-three weeks and I contributed to every issue.

I established the Bakunin Press at 133 Goswell Road in 1907. The entire press I bought for ten shillings in Soho from a foreign refugee waiter who was returning to Poland (I believe) and trundled it across London with the aid of my comrade Charles Lahr, on a barrow. The bargain included a broken-down platen, a huge tin of printing ink, a mass of type, some printer's form, and a lot of paper.



133 GOSWELL ROAD, CLERKENWELL, LONDON, 1957

We produced several pamphlets from here and established the Bakunin Press. The pamphlets included *The Manifesto of the Industrial Union of Direct Actionists; The Religion and Economics of Sex Oppression;* and the following further propaganda pamphlets: *Historical and Traditional Christianity; The Logic and Economics of the Class Struggle; From Anglican Boy Preacher to Anarchist Socialist Impossiblist,* etc.

I remember one strange thing about this press. The foreign Waiters' Union had produced on it a monthly sheet attacking the tronc system. The leading article in one issue ended: "Swelpmegawd!" in one word.

Religion and Economics of Sex Oppression was marred by my youth. It was revised in 1911 and republished under the title of *Socialism and Marriage.* Under that title it circulates still without further change.

I also aimed to publish from 133 Goswell Road a Library of Synthetical Iconoclasts. These included biographies of *Richard Carlile; Rev. Robert Taylor, the Devil's Chaplain;* and *Michael Bakunin.* Actually these works have been published in booklet form since. On *Richard Carlile* I may say that my writings are those of an authority.

If ever a place has earned remembrance as a centre of thought evolution, and as a pioneer revolutionary centre, 133 Goswell Road has. Today, although the occupant of the shop has changed, the 1957 photograph shows that the cellar in which the press was lodged, and the Communist Propaganda Group was established, remains unchanged.

The following announcement is culled from *Freedom* for August 1907:

COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA GROUP

Excellent educational work is being accomplished by this group, with its classes in elocution and industrial history. Although but a few weeks old, several of the comrades who attend its meetings are beginning to lose that disease so fatal to effective platform

propaganda — self-consciousness. Meetings are held at Comrade Aldred's place of residence, 133 Goswell Road, E.C., every Tuesday and Friday evening, whilst an excellent library for the use of comrades is situate at Comrade Ramage's abode, 23B Peabody Buildings, Farringdon Road, E.C. Further particulars of the group's aims and policy may be obtained from the first-named comrade, who is acting pro tem. *as general secretary.*

During his visits to London, and during his exile there, Lenin never once sought out what history will declare to be the famous pioneer address of Communist propaganda and agitation in London. He reserved his applause for Harry Quelch, who was a militarist and a Lassallean and was responsible (in part) for my being victimised at the *Daily Chronicle* office because I would not unite with capitalist Liberalism against Socialism. Lenin did understand the message of the Paris Commune. He was the great leader of the Russian Revolution. But he was a poor student of politics outside of Russia. He did not understand revolutionary psychology except as it related to Russia. This was a terrible failing in one who was a genius of social revolution.

Apart from publishing essays in both papers, above my own name, and the *nom-de-plume, Ajax Junior*, I entered on a great open-air lecture campaign throughout London.

The following lecture announcement from *The Voice of Labour* weekly list indicates my activity in London during 1907. In every case the meetings were carried out. I have only six issues by me as I write. All lectures are on Sunday, except where otherwise stated.

June 22nd.

Plaistow—Green Gate, 7 p.m., Guy A. Aldred.

June 29th.

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred.

Brockwell Park—3.30 and 6.30, Guy A. Aldred.

July 6th.

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "What Constitutes Freedom and Freethought?"

Brockwell Park—3.15 p.m., Guy A. Aldred, "Christian Criminals and Atheist Moralists."

Brockwell Park—6.15 p.m. Guy A. Aldred, "Robert Taylor, C.E.S., Infidel."

Clerkenwell—Garnault Place, Rosebery Avenue, every Monday, 8.30 p.m., I.U.D.A. meeting; chairman, V. Ramage; lecturer, Guy A. Aldred, "Industrial Unionism and Trade Unionists."

Marble Arch—I.U.D.A. meetings convened by Guy A. Aldred and V. Ramage every Saturday evening at 7.30.

July 20th.

Southwark—Webber Street and New Cut, 11.30 a.m., I.U.D.A. meeting, Guy A. Aldred and Alex. Ray, "The Policy of the I.U.D.A."

Commercial Road—Rose Palace Hall (2nd floor), Myrdle Street, E., 3.15 p.m., Cigarette Makers' Union; speeches in English and Yiddish. Among the speakers invited are the following: Guy A. Aldred, B. Harvey, C. Mowbray, J. Caplan, R. Rocker, John Turner, Morris Myers, and others.

Mile End Waste—6.30, I.U.D.A. meeting, V. Ramage and Guy A. Aldred, "The Basis of Industrial Unionism."

Walthamstow—Church Hill, Hoe Street, Monday, 8.30, F. Large and Guy A. Aldred, "The Failure of Social Democracy."

Marble Arch—Saturday, I.U.D.A. meeting, 7.30, J. Sugar, V. Ramage, and Guy A. Aldred.

July 27th.

Workers' Friend Club—Jubilee Street, E., Friday, July 26, 8.30; lecture by Guy A. Aldred, "The Programme and Policy of the I.U.D.A."

Marble Arch—Saturday, I.U.D.A. meeting, 7.30., Guy A. Aldred, A. Ray, A Young and J. Sugar.

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "Buddha and Buddhism."

Brockwell Park—3.15, F. Theakstone, "From Christian Chorister to Atheist Advocate"; 6.15, Guy A. Aldred, "The Crusades."

Walthamstow—Church Hill, Hoe Street, Monday, 8.30, I.U.D.A. meeting, Guy A. Aldred and "The Irish Rebel."

Tower Hill—Unemployed meetings every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 1 to 3, Williams, Greenwood, Aldred and others.

August 10th.

Marble Arch—Saturday, I.U.D.A. meeting, 7.30, Guy A. Aldred, A. Ray, A. Young, and J. Sugar.

Victoria Park—3.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Christian Criminals and Atheist Moralists"; 6.15, "Why I am an Atheist."

Hoxton Church—11.30, Guy A. Aldred and

V. Ramage, I.U.D.A. meeting, "The Failure of Trade Unionism."

Tower Hill—Unemployed meetings every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1 to 3, Williams, Greenwood, Aldred, and others.

September 7th.

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "Modern Views of the Atonement."

Victoria Park—3.15, Guy A. Aldred; 5.30, "From Superstition to Reason."

Mile End Waste—Outside Assembly Hall, 8.30, I.U.D.A. meeting, Guy A. Aldred, C. Mowbray, and H. Morris.

Marble Arch—Saturday, I.U.D.A. meeting, 7.30, Guy A. Aldred, A. Ray, A. Young, and J. Sugar.

The Voice of Labour also published notes from my pen, recording the progress of the anti-parliamentary activity of which 133 Goswell Road had become the centre.

I reproduce excerpts from these notes from the issue published on dates mentioned. Repetitions are avoided as far as possible. The excerpts serve this useful purpose: they prove that I lived in a world of illusion as regards the early approach of the Social Revolution.

6. I.U.D.A. ACTIVITY

Revolutions never go backward.
—WENDELL PHILLIPS

1.—May 25th.

When the economic conditions are ripe for the success of any movement, the trickery of individuals who would betray the workers' cause for their own advancement avails little against the force of such a propaganda. This is essentially one of the principles of Industrial Unionism; and as the manifesto of the "Industrial Union of Direct Actionists" will show, the trickery of Social Democrats notwithstanding, direct action will be the basis of the new Unionism that is being conceived in the light of bitter experience. Wherever the propaganda is being carried on, success is waiting on our efforts. In Islington and Clerkenwell the local paper has been forced to devote several columns to the elucidation of the principles of direct action and of Anarchism, whilst reporting my meetings at length. In Plaistow the comrades are fighting the good fight, whilst the German anti-militarist movement is taking root in the "foreign" quarter (as though racial difference varied the principle of exploitation!)

Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester are calling for speakers, and I am hoping to visit these centres of activity.

The tone of Freethought gatherings also, which I have had occasion to address in South London latterly, are becoming more decidedly anti-authoritarian, whilst Tolstoi's admirers are growing daily—i.e those who admire his revolutionary fervour more than his anti-artistic and anti-scientific declarations. The Social Revolution is coming. Of this there can be no doubt. And it is nearing rapidly. The economic force behind it is tremendous, and against it the declamations of Parliamentarians are as the breath of flies before the storm.

The I.U.D.A. is going to succeed, and its initials are already familiar. Twopence a week, not contributed to the sending of a fellow worker to the home of snobocratic oratory and legislative humbug, but to the advancement of the cause of Labour's solidarity, will be but a small sum well spent, and it will not be given to a large friendly society existing either to be pillaged by the capitalist class or exploited by officialism.

* * * *

Of course, it must not be forgotten that the need of propaganda has rendered the forming of a propaganda group of paramount importance. A few comrades, including myself, have now formed such a group, and its first meeting will shortly be announced. The group will supply speakers for meetings of the comrades and defray expenses, comrades to contribute to the funds of the group for this purpose. The secretary would also be glad to hear from comrades who have had some experience of speaking, and are willing to help to further the principles. It is essential that lady speakers should take to the field, as one woman comrade is worth many male comrades when she is a speaker. Under the auspices of the Propaganda Group, corres-

pondence and oral classes in economics, elocution, and industrial history are also being arranged. Of these more anon. Further inquiries should be addressed to 133 Goswell Road, E.C., where I am also happy to receive requests from comrades for speakers, as also to arrange for lectures. Let us be up and doing, and the emancipation of man will be at hand.

* * * *

Amongst other things, it is obvious that the *Voice of Labour* has a mission to perform, and has therefore come to stay. I write "stay" and I mean "stay"—to stay until our mission is accomplished, and has become a part of history. The comrades must rally to its support and see to it that it shall be eloquent of the ideals for which we strive. And so, organised, inspired, and strenuous, shall we sweep aside the despots of Parliament and Governmentalism, become one in spirit with Bakunin and the heroes of other climes and times, and onward to the freedom of the world. We have but to look to our training, be true to ourselves, hold strenuously by our principles, but be animated by no prejudice, and the world is ours—the inheritance of those who have toiled.

* * * *

For my part I have put my shoulder to the wheel and now find return impossible. My life is in the movement, and of the movement I must be. This is a healthy phenomenon. Not only so, but since other comrades are similarly placed I must write in the plural, and say these are healthy phenomena. It is for the phenomena to become a totality, and the movement to become something more than a sentimental wave. The need for it lies deep down in social conditions and human degradation. And so we must "be up and doing with a heart for any fate, still achieving and pursuing, learning to labour and to wait". But we must wait with a discontented mien, recognising that propaganda involves money, until Labour is ripe for the General Strike. But if money is needed, the healthy union of comrades is a much more urgent necessity. And it is in the hope of accomplishing such a union that the I.U.D.A. and the Propaganda Group have been conceived. Opposed to the intrigues of politics, their future is a bright one. For working class solidarity conquers all things, and ere long it shall plant the red flag of revolt over all the citadels of the world. Yes; solidarity in revolt and freedom in unity are the principles which are going to spell the doom of capitalism, and secure to man a free generation.

* * * *

2.—June 8th.

COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA GROUP

The above group has been formed for the purpose of carrying on a more effective propaganda amongst the workers generally, whose knowledge of the General Strike, Anti-militarism, and the power of Direct Action is mostly limited to such reports as the capitalist press care to print.

To this end the general secretary would be pleased to hear from all comrades who would help either in speaking or in selling literature. For those who are willing to help in lecturing Comrade Aldred is forming classes, both elementary and advanced, in economics and industrial and social history. An entrance fee of 1s. will be charged.

Educational papers, with questions accompanying, will be issued monthly, and a stamped and addressed envelope must accompany each list of questions for the return of their answers with comments, together with further instruction.

Beginning with the colder autumn months, oral classes in elocution, economics and industrial history will be convened free, but any comrades desiring to anticipate this training are invited to communicate with the secretary. It is to be hoped that lady comrades will make a feature of attending these classes with a view to becoming speakers. The main object of the Group being to inspire comrades with confidence and to equip them with knowledge, it is hoped they will make every use of these classes.

For further information write (enclosing stamped and addressed envelope for reply) to Guy A. Aldred, general secretary, C.P.G., 133 Goswell Road, London, E.C.

* * * *

3—July 6

"Open economic rebellion; the education of ourselves and our children up to the realities of State and capitalist oppression! and the fearless resort to whatever line of action such revolt may involve." Such is the message I propose to take to the inhabitants of those provincial cities I hope to visit shortly. It is the message which I am taking with me wherever I go to lecture on the economic and political conditions of the day. . . .

I might add that at the present time the Liverpool Group has twenty members, and

that there are many waiting to join. Its vigorous demonstration of its existence might well be emulated by other groups. Group secretaries please note

Reynolds, in its issue for June 23, briefly outlined our principles and objects, as also did the German paper, *Die Direkte Aktion*, in its issue for June 22; whilst *Der Freie Arbeiter* for June 29 translates the main part of the Manifesto published in *Voice of Labour* for June 1, and expresses the hope that the new tone of the organisation in its appeal to the proletariat will be vigorously responded to.

On Sunday last I addressed three meetings under the auspices of the Camberwell branch of the National Secular Society. The meetings were well attended, and the tone of the gatherings certainly spoke well for the good work the Freethinkers are doing. There can be no doubt that the Freethought movement has given the world better fighters for liberty than has any State, Democratic or Christian Socialist movement; and as a stepping-stone to the economic revolt and principles of real freedom. Freethought is invaluable. I therefore hold, as a believer in Bakuninian thoroughness, that it is a duty to insist on the atheistic and Anarchistic basis of progress. With the piety of the sentimentalist, and the sentiment of the pietist we can have no compromise.

* * * *

The iconoclastic attitude which the I.U.DA. has adopted towards the policy of Trade Unions has occasioned some surprise amongst those of my readers who venerate Trade Unionism after the manner of the Roman Catholic and his reverence for saintly relics. My only comment is to challenge any defender of the Trade Union faith to show in what way Labour has benefited by Trade Unionism. Should any *fidei defensor* be forthcoming, I am quite willing to meet him in either literary or platform debate—the last-mentioned for preference. Also, with regard to the Industrial Unionism of the Socialist Labour Party, with its compromise between direct action and political intrigue, I wonder if any member of this party is prepared to defend its hybrid Industrial Unionism against the well-defined and real Industrial Unionism of the I.U.D.A. Why will not the Socialist Labour Party carry its principles to their logical conclusion?

* * * *

4—July 13th

As announced in these notes two weeks since, the first meeting of the Communist Propaganda Group was held at my residence last Friday. Whilst the attendance was good, it was expected by some comrades that it would have been larger than what it was. The meeting proved itself fairly business-like, and it was decided to hold the next meeting on Tuesday, July 16. In all there were fifteen comrades present, and it was decided to at once inaugurate elocution and industrial history classes, meetings for this purpose being convened on Tuesdays and Fridays. It was further proposed to establish a lending library, Ramage being appointed to draw up a catalogue of the books that were available for comrades' use. Comrades intending to become group members will first have to be introduced by other comrades who are already members, in accordance with the unanimous decision of the meeting. As regards the question of finance, which was not discussed at the meeting, some members subsequently suggested a minimum subscription of twopence a week, whilst others (including myself) leaned towards the idea of voluntary contributions, leaving the question of the amount to members' own discretion. This matter will have to be discussed at our next gathering. Of course, as I pointed out to members on Friday evening, the Propaganda Group is an educational movement, and is not related to the I.U.D.A. as such. Membership of the one group does not, therefore, involve membership of the other, nor agreement with its policy. I trust that this statement will prevent our comrades from confounding the two groups.

* * * *

"A Trade Unionist M.P.," writing in the *Bolton and Barrow News*, warns his readers against confounding our Union with any ordinary Trade Union, and adds that it is an imitation of the French General Confederation of Labour. What rubbish! It is quite true that our Union is founded on the principle of regional organisation, and that its ideals are similar to those of direct action Unions abroad; but that is only because the acceptance of like principles, coupled with a tendency to organise, must produce like organisations; the growth of such bodies as are founded on a similar basis being parallel, and not imitative. It would be much more correct to attribute "A Trade Unionist M.P.'s" petulant contribution to the criticism of the I.U.D.A. to an imitative endeavour begotten

of ignorance. The column containing the article seemed to be a stereo, and was probably supplied by a London Press Agency at half-a-crown a column. Such, O shades of Richard Carlile! are the ways of our glorious Free Press! A Prostituted Press would be alike more alliterative and more true.

On Monday, July 1, a debate took place at Garnault Place between Mayhew, of the Social Democratic Federation, and myself, on *Direct Action v. Legislation*. The meeting was well attended, and very successful from many points of view. The same is true of the meeting I held in Hyde Park on Saturday evening last; as also of the three lectures I delivered on Sunday under the auspices of the Camberwell Branch of the National Secular Society. Of these, I may be excused if I briefly outline the substance of my afternoon address on *Christian Criminals and Atheist Moralists*. Defining a moralist as one who, either by his example or by the influence of his teaching, made for the elevation of the individual and the identification of personal happiness with communal well-being, I proceeded to enumerate the main teachings and characteristics of Spinoza, the psycho-Atheist, Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall, Bastian, Bakunin, Reclus, Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, Kropotkin, Louise Michel, and several other Atheist moralists. On the other hand, I defined a criminal as one who by his compromise with hypocrisy or by his professional philantrophy caused men to negate the principles of true being, and for some temporary relief of the flesh sell their independence of spirit. This led, for divergent reasons, to the inclusion as "Christian Criminals" of Charles Peace, General Booth, the late Dr. Barnardo, Prebendary Wilson Carlile, Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop of London, John D. Rockefeller, Dr Aked, and a few more "soul savers" and their capitalist confreres. My exposure of the tactics of these philanthropic rogues was well received, and the audience applauded my recalling the "oil king's" donation of £20,000 to the Baptists' Foreign Missions, and his securement of Dr. Aked as his pastor, in connection with the appended variation of the Doxology:

Praise John from whom oil blessings flow;
Praise him, ye Baptists here below,
Praise him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise John and God, but John the most.

Bigotry is a characteristic of Social Democracy. For some time past those branches of the Social Democratic Federation which had booked me for lecture engagements, knowing my attitude towards Parliamentarism and Trade Unionism, have been busy cancelling my engagements. The latest to do so is the Northampton Branch, for which I was to have spoken on July 14th. I am becoming so used to this modern Inquisition as to find it only amusing. And it would seem, the way the S.D.F. are treating those members of their body who have sympathy with the Industrial Workers of the World, that I am not the only victim of their boycott. I am now wondering whether the Walthamstow Branch will have the courage to carry through the debate which I am to have with one of their shining lights on August 1 next. If they have not got the name of an opponent, I will supply them with a list of S.D.F. speakers who have recently challenged me to debate. And I am prepared to discuss any phase of the social problem, or of the respective policies of the I.U.D.A. and the S.D.F. Now then, Walthamstow, risk the anger of the executive, and play the game like men!

ERRATA

No 9, page 214, col. 1, line 3, "Revolutionary Manifesto". Date should be December 28, 1906 and not October 28, 1906.

No 11, page 243, col. 2, line 1. Read "same" for "some".

Ibid, page 253, beneath portrait. Read "Preacher" for "Preacer".

No Traitor's Gait!: The Autobiography of Guy A. Aldred. Vol. 1, The Strickland Press, 1955. Nineteenth Century Collections Online, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6hHcA2. Accessed 28 June 2018.